

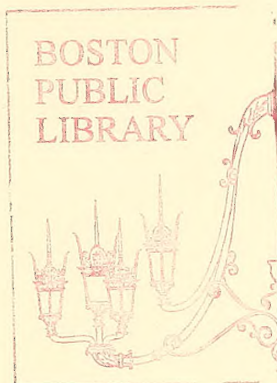
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 06588 067 4

**Boston 400**

# Connecting the City and Its People



**DRAFT FOR COMMENT**

December 10, 1999

**GOV DOCS**

HT

177

.B7B68

1999x

**Research  
Library**



# Boston 400: Connecting the City and its People

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<i>Boston's unique elements .....</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>The challenges .....</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>The initiatives .....</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Implementation .....</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Toward 2030 .....</i>	<i>vi</i>
<b>Boston's legacies to our time .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Boston is a city of neighborhoods .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Initiative: Transit-centered urban villages .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Initiative: Charm bracelets .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Initiative: Affordable housing for all .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Supporting Initiative: Community gateways and markers .....</i>	<i>38</i>
<b>Boston is a vital natural environment.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Initiative: Communities connected by water .....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Initiative: Parks for Boston's commonwealth.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Initiative: Investing in our parks and natural resources.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Supporting Initiative: Playing fields for the next generation.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Supporting Initiative: Building nature into the city's fabric.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<b>Boston is the economic hub of New England.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<i>Initiative: Hub of the Hub .....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Initiative: A new generation of transit .....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>Initiative: Designs for development .....</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>Initiative: Fueling Boston's economic engine.....</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>Supporting initiative: Regional traffic design to protect communities.....</i>	<i>90</i>
<b>Boston is a cultural and learning center .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<i>Initiative: Schools for the next century .....</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>Initiative: Public art everywhere .....</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>Initiative: Historic preservation for development.....</i>	<i>108</i>
<i>Supporting Initiative: Finding your way in the city .....</i>	<i>113</i>
<i>Supporting Initiative: Performance spaces in the neighborhoods.....</i>	<i>116</i>



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015



**The road to 2030..... 120**

*Implementation strategies..... 121*

---

**APPENDIX**

*Sample page of the report*

*Sample generalized zoning map*

*Six samples of the "activity center maps"*

*List of "activity center maps" to be included in the Appendix of the final report*







## Introduction

In January of 1997, Mayor Thomas M. Menino asked the Boston Redevelopment Authority to oversee the development of a citywide plan. The Mayor made two provisos. First, he told the BRA to actively seek the involvement from people all over the city, so that the plan's agenda would reflect the imagination and strengths of all of the city's neighborhoods. Second, he said to be bold.

Boston 400 focuses on the physical elements of the City. Boston 400's mission is to enhance and connect what we call the "public realm," the spaces and systems that we all share as a community – streets and sidewalks, parks and natural spaces, schools and other civic buildings, commercial districts, cultural and historic resources, ~~universities~~ <sup>universities</sup>. By fostering a wide range of improvements and connections between these spaces, we can make Boston a more livable and efficient place in which to live, work, study, and visit. If Boston has a strong and vibrant public realm, then its people can do what they do better. Our job, then, is to provide a foundation.

Since the Mayor initiated the process, Boston 400 has held hundreds of meetings in every neighborhood of the city, with neighborhood groups and with a wide range of architects and planners, community development activists, parks advocates and environmentalists, transportation and housing experts, cultural leaders and historic preservationists, and economists.

We asked the people of Boston a series of basic questions: What do you want Boston to look like in the year 2030, when the city marks its 400th anniversary? What do you want your neighborhood to look like? Where do you want to go with your family, friends, and neighbors? How can we design and build the kinds of spaces you want in your neighborhoods and throughout the city?

## BOSTON'S UNIQUE ELEMENTS

As Boston 400 gathered in civic spaces all over the city – community centers, schools, health centers, churches, bookstores, local businesses, city offices – residents and merchants expressed a compelling vision of Boston's character and promise. They focused on four elements that make Boston a unique place in American life:

**Boston is a city of neighborhoods.** First and foremost, Boston is a place that offers a variety of grounded and engaging places to live. Most of Boston's neighborhoods originated as parts of independent cities and towns, which were later annexed to the city, and these communities retain a special character based on history, geography, and economy. The neighborhoods offer a great diversity of housing, transit access to the city and region, vital parks and natural spaces, and great cultural and civic spaces. The neighborhoods also offer comfortable public spaces to walk and explore the city. People from all over are rediscovering Boston's neighborhoods. From the elegant rowhouses of Back Bay and Beacon Hill to the majestic Victorians of Dorchester and Roxbury, from the classic apartment buildings of Fenway and Allston-Brighton to the triple-deckers of Jamaica Plain and Hyde Park, people of all types have discovered the convenience and excitement of everyday urban life. More than ever before, the neighborhoods are embracing new waves of immigrants from Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, as well as traditional immigration sources in Western Europe. [see *MAP of Boston's neighborhoods*] [see *MAP of annexation*]

**Boston is a vital natural environment.** Boston offers a wide range of parks and natural spaces – the Boston Harbor, five rivers, the Harbor Islands, the Emerald Necklace, and hundreds



of neighborhood parks, playgrounds, sports fields and arenas, wilds, and gardens – that integrate the evolving manmade landscape with nature's own shifting forces. Every neighborhood boasts a natural treasure that would be the envy of whole cities. After years of neglect, these spaces are being cleaned up and restored – and connected to the lives of the people in nearby neighborhoods. The cleanups of the Harbor and the Charles River have made national headlines, but other efforts are under way to make the Neponset, Muddy, Chelsea, and Mystic rivers swimmable and fishable once again. Frederick Law Olmsted's masterpiece, the Emerald Necklace, has seen improvements from one end at the Boston Common to the other end at Franklin Park. The Harbor Islands are being planned as a national park. And all over the city, neighborhood by neighborhood, parks and wilds and gardens are finding a new vitality in the life of residents and visitors.

**Boston is the hub of New England.** Boston lies at the center of the regional economy and transportation system, and its Downtown is the vital force that organizes these dynamic systems. All roads might not lead to Boston, but enough do to create a diverse, efficient, and creative hub of business and cultural life. Every day, 250,000 people come to Boston to work, attend classes, and visit cultural attractions. Businesses are born every day. Goods and services coarse through the roads, trains, planes, and shipping routes that comprise the city and region's circulatory system. At the center of it all is a downtown that offers much more than a typical "central business district." Boston's Downtown is a 24-hour ballet of business and tourism, culture and sports, learning and living, restaurants and lofts, parks and waterfronts, walkable streets and diverse residential districts.

**Boston is a cultural and learning center.** Boston is a global magnet for people who care about higher education and research, the fine arts and every conceivable form of music, theater and film, and every other kind of creative endeavor. The area's world-class cultural and educational institutions offer countless opportunities for people just starting out and positions of leadership for the very best in all fields.

## THE CHALLENGES

These four qualities make Boston one of the most desirable places in America to live and work at the turn of the century. *But in each of these categories, Boston faces significant challenges.* Consider:

- Traffic congestion. From the Downtown to the city's far-flung neighborhoods, residents and businesses complain about traffic congestion that wastes time, pollutes the air, and disfigures the landscape of the community. To an extent, traffic is an essential element of dense urban life. But good designs for transit nodes, and aggressive strategies that encourage transit and discourage auto use, could give neighborhoods the breathing room they need to build community life.
- Housing affordability. Especially during the economic boom of the late 1990s, housing has become unaffordable for many families, young people just starting out, and seniors retiring in the city. Prices have more than doubled in the span of a couple of years in some neighborhoods. Intense housing inflation in neighborhoods such as Back Bay and the South End are causing a ripple effect to the Fenway and Jamaica Plain, and further ripple effect to Roslindale and Dorchester, as families move in search of affordable homes. With one of the oldest housing stocks in the country, Boston needs major new construction. In his most recent State of the City address, Mayor Menino announced a goal of 2,000 new units in 1999.

Thomas M.





• The need to “incubate” new businesses – and retain existing businesses – that provide good jobs at good wages for people of all backgrounds. Boston and surrounding communities host a wealth of universities, hospitals, and research institutes that generate <sup>more</sup> economic activity ~~than many countries~~. Too often, that economic activity takes root outside Boston. In the 1990's, 290,000 people left the state of Massachusetts – more than two-thirds of them people in their 20s. Keeping these people, and getting them to put down business roots, is vital to the city's future prosperity.

• Inadequate connections between parks and other community resources. All across the city, neighborhoods boast a wide range of parks and other public facilities that serve as the backbone of community life. Too often these facilities are disconnected; they fail to create the kind of synergy that makes neighborhoods vital places to venture out for young and old.

• Incomplete connections among citywide parks, harbor fronts, and riverways. For years, the Parks Department has restored a number of pieces of the famed Emerald Necklace. But there are still a number of “breaks” in the citywide natural system. Along the 43-mile Harborwalk, from the Forest Hills T area to Columbia Road, along watersheds like Chelsea Creek and the Neponset River reservation, the system of citywide parks and natural spaces need a greater sense of cohesion. All citywide parks need to be integrated into the larger process of urban planning in all neighborhoods.

• Inadequate neighborhood spaces for culture and recreation. Many neighborhoods – Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Allston-Brighton – have few parks for residents to go for active and passive recreation. In other neighborhoods, the parks require updating and redesign to make them the vibrant public places that all communities need. All over the city, many neighborhood parks are cut off from other community resources – streets and sidewalks, schools and libraries, business districts, social services – that would make those natural spaces a regular part of everyday life for residents and visitors.

• The need for new schools – and the need for those schools and other civic buildings to fit into the community context. In the age of the community learning center, where lifelong learning is the goal and the lessons of the “effective schools literature” is applied to K-to-12 programs, school buildings and their campuses need to provide vibrant and adaptable learning environments that feed on the larger dynamic of community life. Too often in the past, we have built schools that fail to build a sense of community internally and isolate schools from community life externally.

These are the challenges that demand attention as Boston charts its course toward the city's 400th anniversary in 2030.

## THE INITIATIVES

To meet these challenges, Boston 400 is asking the people who live and work in the city to consider 13 major initiatives and six supporting initiatives. These initiatives are organized according to the four qualities of Boston:

### Boston is a city of neighborhoods

**Charm bracelets.** Building on the model of the Emerald Necklace, develop neighborhood “charm bracelets” throughout the city. Enhance and link parks, civic buildings, neighborhood



business districts, historic and cultural spaces, and residential spaces into seamless systems that offer active and passive recreation for all.

**Transit-oriented urban villages.** Focus neighborhood residential, business, and cultural and recreational development around strategic transit nodes. Limit parking near transit nodes. Design common spaces – schools, libraries, community centers, churches, health centers, parks and playgrounds – as campuses to encourage broad public use. Make pedestrian access the centerpiece of all development, from the level of the parcel to the neighborhood. Connect urban villages to the rest of the city through bicycle paths and facilities.

**Affordable housing for all.** Develop a comprehensive assessment of housing needs according to type of housing and neighborhood. Develop vacant parcels so that the urban and transit character of the community is strengthened. Develop new models of housing development that reduce transaction costs, lessen speculation, and provide a balance of housing types. Establish a housing “rainy day fund” to see strengthen opportunity during economic downturns, improve maintenance, and build more cheaply.

**Gateways to the city.** Create attractive gateways for the streets that serve as points of entry to the City from nearby communities.

## **Boston is a vital natural environment**

**Parks for Boston's Commonwealth.** Complete the restoration of the Emerald Necklace, with connections and improvements to Forest Hills T area, Columbia Road, and parks and green spaces in the Heart of the City (Franklin Park, Arnold Arboretum, Boston Nature Center, and other nearby green spaces). Develop comprehensive strategies for major green corridors like the Southwest Corridor, East Boston Greenway, and Charles-to-Charles connection.

**Communities connected by water.** Enhance connections to the Boston Harbor and Harbor Islands and complete Harborwalk. Develop comprehensive efforts for planning with river overlay districts. Using the river overlay district, develop a comprehensive strategy to link river and community development.

**Protection and access for natural spaces.** Develop a menu of legal and policy strategies to protect endangered spaces, and assure access to precious private natural spaces.

**Playing fields for the next century.** Working with Parks, Schools, and other agencies, develop a citywide system of playing fields that responds to the changing demographics and popularity of sports.

**Building nature into the fabric of the city.** Develop standards and systems to integrate the natural environment into the physical development of the city.

## **Boston is the hub of New England**

**Hub of the Hub.** Enhance and highlight the *corridors* and *focal points* that give definition to Boston's Downtown. Incorporate Central Artery and City Hall Plaza improvements into a comprehensive plan for Downtown.

**A new generation of transit.** Building on a comprehensive analysis of the city's transportation system, develop new transit lines, conversions of existing T lines, and extensions of existing T lines. Complete the urban ring and develop connections between the ring and nodes in the metropolitan area.



**Fueling Boston's economic engine.** Building on Boston's position as a center of university and research activity, develop strategically located business incubators. Recruit new manufacturing activity to appropriate parcels. Target firms in early phases of growth to locate and stay in Boston. — *Encourage appropriate Dev't in neighborhoods as well as downtown.*

**Designs for development.** Adopt and enforce design standards for economic development projects that enhance their whole areas.

**Regional traffic design that supports community and commerce.** Separate regional and citywide traffic from neighborhood streets. Develop comprehensive parking, commuter transit, and cargo strategies that get goods to market and people to work without threatening the quality of neighborhood life.

## **Boston is a cultural and learning center**

**Schools for the next century.** Build and rehabilitate schools that create oases of learning for children, provide lifelong learning opportunities for all Bostonians, and strengthen the urban character of their neighborhoods. Locate schools at critical community crossroads.

**Public art everywhere.** Provide incentives for the placement of permanent and temporary displays of public art throughout the city. Establish a neighborhood-based process for the commissioning new works and financing maintenance of existing works.

**Finding your way in the city.** Establish orientation centers around the City, wherever institutions and neighborhoods desire to place them. Work with institutions and other state and local agencies to develop a coherent, comprehensive system of signage to orient Bostonians.

**Performance spaces for all.** Develop performance spaces for music, theater, and other events in all neighborhoods, using school facilities when possible. Design and program new cultural spaces to be multigenerational and accessible.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

If Bostonians endorse these initiatives, the City needs to be more creative than ever before to implement programs to carry out the initiatives.

Unlike the last time Boston produced a citywide plan, in 1965, the federal government is not likely to provide significant resources for community development, housing, transportation, and other major challenges. Under the auspices of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other agencies, the Federal government oversaw numerous programs in the 1960s that involved billions of dollars in aid to cities. But for a variety of reasons — some fiscal, some philosophical — the Federal government no longer favors large-scale intervention in urban affairs. The Federal government now asks the states and cities to bear more of the burden of investment in their own development.

At the same time, the political authority to oversee major change in Boston has become more dispersed and fragmented. Old-line coalitions that centralized power, like the legendary Vault group of business and civic leaders, have faded. Meanwhile, much to the city's overall benefit, communities all over Boston have demanded a greater voice in shaping the planning and development of their physical environments. Community development corporations, environmental and parks advocates, boards of trade, activists for bicycles and pedestrian spaces, cultural organizations — all have played a vital role in shaping and carrying out important projects for the neighborhoods and for the whole city.





Somehow, the city needs to develop creative approaches to funding and implementing. To carry through the Boston 400 initiatives that gain public support, three strategies are possible:

- **Community partnerships.** Following the models of Main Streets, the Boston Schoolyards Initiative, and the Boulevards Project, several Boston 400 initiatives would require collaboration between City agencies, community organizations, and various business and nonprofit groups. Such initiatives include Charm Bracelets, Transit-oriented Urban Villages, Public Art and Performance Spaces, Finding Your Way in the City, Transit to Boston's Culture, Affordable Housing for All, Gateways to the City, and Cultural Passport. Recognizing that communities are likely to have different goals and priorities, it is important to implement these programs only where there is community support, and according to the particular qualities of the communities.

- **Campaigns for new funding.** Some initiatives require major new allocations of money from the state or city government – which might require a statewide bond issue or budget appropriation. Initiatives requiring a “campaign” for new sources of funding include A New Generation of Transit, Parks for Boston's Commonwealth, Communities Connected by Water, City Fairgrounds, and Playing Fields for the Next Century. Only by developing a citywide vision of these issues, and pursuing them with coordinated efforts at the state level of government, can Boston get the resources it needs for these vital elements of the public realm.

- **Strategic use of existing resources.** On a number of issues, the City is already expected to make substantial investments in its built environment over the next generation. The key here is to make sure that money gets spent wisely, that major projects support the longterm goals of the City. In the coming decades, for example, Boston will be building Schools for the Next Century. To assure that every school building and campus reinforces high standards of location and design, Boston 400 aims to develop guidelines for these facilities – and other new civic buildings as well. Better management systems can help assure Playing Fields for the Next Century.

- **Designs for urban life.** A number of planning challenges transcend particular places and projects. By adopting standards and incentives for good urban design that apply across neighborhoods and jurisdictions, Boston 400 can assure that homebuilders, developers, and planners have a consistent and reliable set of standards to strengthen the urban character of the city. Designs for Development and Traffic and Parking the Supports Community – as well as elements of Transit-oriented Urban Villages and Communities Connected by Water – could be promoted with careful development of development and design guidelines. Business people and others have argued that such guidelines are essential for maintaining a predictable, level playing field for development.

## TOWARD 2030

In the years leading to its 400th anniversary in 2030, Boston faces enormous challenges that originate far from our own borders. Global markets, Technological revolution in all fields, Demographic changes, Environmental challenges, Social stratification.

The magnitude of these changes makes the future impossible to predict. The question is: How can we plan for the future that no one can foresee?

In a way, we have no choice. In a time as dynamic and volatile as the next generation is likely to be, the need to create a steady foundation is ever more urgent.

We can never know just how far the computer revolution will take us – but we can create a business environment that provides a sturdy and adaptable infrastructure for whatever happens.



We can never predict the makeup of the family or the composition of communities – but we can provide convenient spaces for basic family and community needs in all neighborhoods. <sup>alone,</sup> we cannot do much about global warming – but we can make cleanup of our environmental spaces a priority. We cannot <sup>eradicate</sup> ~~confront~~ the growing gap between the haves and have-nots in American society – but we can provide a broad array of public places and services that gives everyone the basic tools they need to succeed. We do not know what future transportation technologies might shape the way people use the automobile – but we can make sure that all travelers have a broad choice of locomotion and the communities are not shortchanged in the process of helping people get in and around the city.

Ultimately, Boston 400 cannot provide a <sup>detailed</sup> blueprint for the city's development over the next generation. What we can do, however, is raise basic questions about the elements of urban life that we know are here to stay.

We know that people will always need a place to live and work. We know that people will always need to move around the city. We know that young people – and others in the community – will always need special places to learn. We know that families will always need parks and other civic places to find respite from the rigors of urban life. We know that culture and the arts will always be important to the spiritual and creative life of people and communities.

The goal of Boston 400, and all realistic planning efforts, should be to strengthen the foundations of our city while leaving room for people to work out the particulars of the challenges of their time.

The great Boston planner and teacher Kevin Lynch put the planner's task into perspective several years ago. He wrote: "Our most important responsibility to the future is not to coerce it but attend to it. Collectively, such actions might be called 'future preservation,' just as analogous activity is called historical preservation." If we attend to our future – collectively, with vision but not rigidity – then we will take advantage of the best of Boston's past and allow for the most promising of futures to unfold.



---

## **Boston's legacies to our time**



1.

OLD

## Boston's legacies to our time

All over Boston, the stamp of history can be found in the streets and transit lines, parks and urban wilds, apartment buildings and three-deckers and brownstones, business districts, museums and concert halls and libraries, and even the underground infrastructure that makes the city work on a daily basis.

History has given Boston a truly unique setting for the next generation to make its own history.

What makes Boston attractive to so many people is its authenticity. Boston is a city of history, telling the American story from the colonial times to the age of technology. Boston's story encapsulates some of the great dramas that have made America. The use of landfill exemplifies a restlessness and growth, a determination to make a frontier when the existing spaces are inadequate. International trade has moved through several distinct phases, changing to meet the needs of shipping, rail, highway, and air travel. Manufacturing reflects the way muscle and brawn once gave America its ships and textiles and missiles and consumer goods. Boston's world-famous park system exemplifies the "City Beautiful" movement and the attempt to create an environment that keeps Bostonians connected to nature. World-class universities, medical institutions, museums, libraries, concert halls, and theaters attest to Boston's search for knowledge and culture.

All over the city – in school buildings, residential districts, commercial districts, gardens and wild preserves, train stations, old breweries and warehouses – the history of the city provides a prelude to its future.

To plan the future, citizens need to understand their own past and bend it to the aspirations and potential of the future. Boston's past has left a number of legacies with which planners and citizens must reckon in order to create a more prosperous, equitable, diverse, cultural, and natural city. To explore these legacies is to set forth ~~a set of~~ challenges for the city as it approaches its 400th anniversary in 2030.

The history of Boston is, simply put, a history of connections. In ways too numerous to count, Boston has succeeded when it has created connections between its people and activities located all over the city and region. When connections are forged, in ways that respect people's communities and histories, Boston thrives. When Boston provides connections to hundreds of neighborhood resources – schools, parks, housing opportunities, public art, shopping areas – the city thrives. When Boston provides connections to precious natural resources, from the Boston Harbor and the city's five rivers to the Emerald Necklace to neighborhood parks and gardens and wilds, the city thrives. When Boston provides connections to transportation systems and jobs, the city thrives. When Boston provides connections to museums, theaters and concert halls, schools, public arts, and other cultural and learning opportunities, the city thrives.

A number of important legacies set the challenge for Boston's planning and development in the next generation. Each of these legacies and challenges can be understood with reference to Boston's four essential qualities: as a city of neighborhoods, as a vital natural environment, as the hub of New England, and as a cultural and learning center.





The contours of Boston are set by natural spaces. Glacial shifts created the drumlin-style harbor islands, a set of five rivers, and a grand harbor that define each of Boston's neighborhoods. Where natural history left off, Boston's people have continued to develop special natural spaces. The majestic Olmsted parks system and an extensive network of neighborhood parks, playgrounds, gardens, and wilds throughout the city make the city a vital natural environment. At the same time Bostonians first sought refuge in this internationally acclaimed park system, economic development contributed to pollution and other forms of environmental degradation; in recent years, Bostonians have worked hard for the reclamation of the natural environment.

## The legacies of Boston's neighborhoods

Boston has thrived from colonial times to the Age of Information, more than anything else, because of its rich and diverse neighborhoods. ~~Boston invented the urban village, that vital concatenation of homes and businesses and cultural and social spaces, with its development of small communities.~~ However Boston has <sup>grown</sup> developed – through intense development of existing spaces, land-making, and annexation of separate communities – it has created distinctive and special neighborhoods that offer great civic, social, and economic opportunities. A tradition of grassroots planning has taken root in Boston over the past generation, helping to create a human-scale city at the same time the city embraces major development opportunities.

**A city made of landmaking.** From its earliest years, Boston has aggressively created new land for commerce and living spaces. From the creation of the wharves in the 1700s to the filling of Mill Pond, Back Bay, and Fens in the 1800s, Boston has made new land for itself through major engineering and public works projects.

The manmade additions to Boston's land mass began with the definition of the waterfront of the old Shawmut Peninsula. Landmaking was necessary to create the piers that made shipping for commerce possible from Boston's earliest days. In the early 1800s, local government guided a larger process of city-building at Front Street, Broad Street, India Wharf, and Mill Pond – but allowed the private sector to coordinate the larger process of development. Mill Pond was the first large-scale landmaking project. Located between the Charles River and today's North End, Mill Pond was itself shaped by the canal-building and other interventions of mill businesses. It became a great public health nuisance and was filled with land taken from Beacon Hill among other sources. The West Cove was filled along with Mill Pond; later South Cove and East Cove were filled as well at the present-day South End neighborhood.

Boston's greatest physical expansion was undoubtedly the filling of the Back Bay and Fens. Numerous plans had been generated for years to create a new neighborhood for the city's booming population and to address the public-health problems that were created by the bridges and boulevards that cut off the bay from its flushing process with the harbor. After years of debate over the design and control of the new district, the actually filling took place by 18xx. Architect Arthur Gilman laid out the French-style boulevards that produced some of the stateliest residential districts in all of America. The nearby Fens – meaning swampland – was filled soon after and became the setting for major institutions like the Museum of Fine Arts, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the YMCA and Northeastern University, Harvard Medical School, and several other hospitals and colleges.



Landmaking also helped to expand and connect other neighborhoods throughout the city. Noddle Island was one of several scraps of land in what became East Boston after landfill. The site of the present-day Logan International Airport was created by landfill in 1922. South Boston's industrial district was also the product of landmaking. Tidal marsh was filled in the South Boston Waterfront District starting in 1832 to create a bustling port with railroad connections inland. Charlestown and Allston-Brighton have also received landfill over the course of Boston's history.

Boston's legacy of landmaking creates an important context for future development. Landmaking – and annexation – has added onto the city's territory patch by patch. Rather than the city having a single street grid, it has many street grids. That makes the challenge of providing efficient transportation systems and fostering connections among neighborhoods more difficult than in other cities.

In addition, because much of the city is landfill, the city's water table is close to the surface. Construction that takes place in landfills must be carefully supervised to assure that the pilings under existing structures are not damaged by exposure to air. For example, the tower of Back Bay's Trinity Church, which weighs 90 million pounds, rests on 2,000 wooden piles. The water table under the church must be monitored on a regular basis to prevent decay. Other buildings in the area have not received such close monitoring – a major challenge with intense development pressures.

**A city of urban villages.** Boston has been famous for the development of its “streetcar suburbs,” the clusters of development that occurred along the train lines built by public and private entities in the early to mid-1800s. As rail service was extended to the present-day neighborhoods of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, West Roxbury, and Hyde Park, so too were utilities and other basic city services. This foundation encouraged businesses and developers of all kinds to build clusters of housing, commercial establishments, and even manufacturing.

To our time, Boston's communities bear the stamp of this “nodal” style of development. Old-fashioned shopping areas close to residential streets and transit service characterize areas like Mattapan Square, Codman Square, Brighton Center, Packard's Corner, Roslindale Village, Dudley Square, Upham's Corner, Grove Hall, Hyde Square, and Centre Street. These communities – and many more like them – offer a place to buy shoes and other everyday goods, get a cup of coffee and a newspaper, visit the bank and health center, and catch a train or bus to work.

But in recent years these community centers have been undermined by changes in residential and business settlement patterns. Suburbanization has lured many families and businesses out of the city. Residents were drawn out of the city by the promise of the “crabgrass frontier” – single-family homes in areas with good schools, broad lawns, and automobile access to a wide variety of stores and social activities. Federal subsidization of suburban housing, highway construction, and industries like defense and aeronautics has drawn people out of the city for the new opportunities of suburbia. Malls and catalogues – and, in recent years, Internet shopping sites – have come to dominate shopping the way Main Street once did.

The challenge for the next generation is to take better advantage of the city's existing infrastructure of transit stations and lines and the business districts that have grown around these nodes. In recent years, a program called Boston Main Streets has developed coordinated efforts to improve the appearance, marketing, and business recruitment to revive some 20 such districts



throughout the city. But Main Streets needs to be supplemented by major citywide efforts to invest in transit service, improve land-use patterns, enhance the public realm with street furniture, and manage traffic. [see *MAP of Boston Main Streets districts*]

**Community-based planning.** Boston has become a city of grassroots planning and development. In the last generation, in reaction to major highway, housing, development, and urban renewal projects, Boston has developed one of the nation's most active legacies of community-based planning.

The galvanizing moment in modern Boston history was the destruction of the old West End neighborhood as part of the federal government's urban renewal program. The 1957 initiative of the Boston Redevelopment Authority enjoyed widespread support among business and civic groups. Despite opposition from residents, the mixed community was condemned and leveled to make way for a series of high-rise apartment buildings. But in the immediate aftermath of the West End, the BRA bowed to the opposition of other urban renewal plans for the North End. BRA Director Edward Logue, who took over after the West End, committed the authority to involving the neighborhoods in future large-scale development planning.

Despite Logue's commitment to "planning with people," tensions often developed over specific redevelopment plans. Protests greeted state and city officials at public meetings for housing, school, highway, and even park projects. One of the most famous protests occurred in 1968 when activists in the South End pitched tents on a parcel of land owned by the BRA. The protesters demanded that the parcel, cleared by the BRA and used for parking, be given over for the provision of affordable housing. That dream was realized in 1987 when several units of new housing opened on the site. The Tent City development is considered a national model not only for community activism but also housing and mixed-income community development.

The high-water point of community activism occurred over the proposal for the construction of a highway to connect Interstate 95 to Boston's Downtown and nearby Cambridge. The idea for an "inner belt" had been discussed since it was proposed by the state Department of Public Works in 1948, and property was cleared in Roxbury, the South End, and Jamaica Plain. But a well-organized citizens movement arose in opposition and Governor Francis Sargent scrapped the plans. Instead of a highway, the state used federal funds to build a new mass transit line and linear park and bicycle path. The Southwest Corridor and Orange Line – which were built after extensive processes of public participation – stand today as monuments to urban-oriented community-building.

In recent years, community participation has become routine in city planning and development. Through the Planning and Zoning Advisory Committees (PZAC), the BRA works with representatives of the neighborhood to write new zoning codes to set standards for development all over the city. A different instrument, the Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD), provides a process for setting temporary standards in areas where uncontrolled development threatens the integrity of the neighborhood. Dozens of other vehicles have been devised to address important planning issues, such as the South Boston Waterfront, development rights over the Massachusetts Turnpike, and the creation of arts centers, libraries, parks, and schools all over the city. Boston 400 began with 200 open meetings in all of Boston's neighborhoods and provided the opportunity for input at each stage of the plan's development.

Community participation has helped Boston officials to design neighborhoods and projects to meet the needs and fit the scale of neighborhoods. But community participation requires better information systems and outreach efforts to insure that all stakeholders in the neighborhoods





provide significant input into planning and development. At the same time, the city government needs to insure that major city priorities are not sacrificed to parochial resistance.

### **Boston is a vital natural environment**

(Repeat from page 2)

~~Boston has thrived from colonial times to the Age of Information, more than anything else, because of its rich and diverse neighborhoods. Boston invented the urban village, that vital concatenation of homes and businesses and cultural and social spaces, with its development of small communities. However Boston has developed – through intense development of existing spaces, land-making, and annexation of separate communities – it has created distinctive and special neighborhoods that offer great civic, social, and economic opportunities. A tradition of grassroots planning has taken root in Boston over the past generation, helping to create a human-scale city at the same time the city embraces major development opportunities.~~

**The Emerald Necklace.** This citywide park system designed by Frederick Law Olmsted offers a natural refuge to people in virtually every neighborhood of the city. The Necklace stretches from Boston Common and the Public Garden down the Commonwealth Avenue Mall to the Back Bay Fens, Riverway and Jamaica Pond, Arnold Arboretum, and Franklin Park. Olmsted's masterpiece – actually the product of visions that had been discussed in Boston for years – expresses a bucolic view of nature. In Olmsted's vision, parks should provide a nature shaped by landscape artists to create a space that separates users from urban life but also from the chaos of untrammelled nature. "The beauty of the park," Olmsted wrote, "should be the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, of the green pastures, and the still waters. What we want to gain is tranquility and rest to the mind." Olmsted's parks had no place for active recreation save a walk or trip on a boat or carriage. Sports and carnivals had no place in Olmsted's notion of a great city park.

Over the years, Bostonians have gradually changed the look and feel of some of Olmsted's parks, but Olmsted's vision still dominates parks planning and development. Until the last generation, Olmsted's parks were neglected and allowed to deteriorate. Bridges, paths, seating areas, ponds, riverways, and landscaping did not live up to the Olmsted ideal. But under the leadership of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department and a dedicated band of community parks activists, the Emerald Necklace has been restored to some of its former glory. Public and nonprofit groups are working to repair the damaged sections of this magnificent system and extend its reach to Columbus Park.

At the same time Bostonians struggle to restore the integrity of the Emerald Necklace, others have sought to develop a broader vision of city parks that embrace Olmsted but also provides a greater diversity of spaces for both active and passive recreation. While the Olmsted parks provide for a respite from the urban environment, other parks are needed to bring communities together for more social purposes. Boston's people have worked to expand Olmsted's vision of parks to include wild preserves, gardens, playing fields, basketball and tennis courts, monuments, and festivals and other civic events.

During the community process for Boston 400, residents of all neighborhoods called for the creation of streetscape and landscaping improvements that would connect not only a wide variety of parks but also important civic buildings, commercial districts, and public squares. Honoring



Olmsted's vision requires not just restoring the Emerald Necklace, but inventing new schemes of connecting the vital resources of all communities of all sizes and locations.

The challenge for the next generation is to continue the restoration of the Emerald Necklace, including an extension of the parks system along Columbia Road to Columbia Point, while at the same time creating exciting new systems of parks and civic spaces in each of the city's neighborhoods.

**Degradation and reclamation of the environment.** For much of the city's history, the environment has been considered a source of riches to exploit. Mills and industrial centers have developed on waterways, sewage systems have dumped wastes in the Boston Harbor and the city's five rivers, and huge parcels of land have been the sites of activities that left long-lasting damage to natural systems.

In recent years, prodded by Federal laws and court cases, the state and city have made major strides to clean up the environment and open it once again to the people of the whole city for recreation and community development. The cleanup of the Boston Harbor and Charles River *has* have demonstrated that environmentalism is not only good for public health and recreation, but also for economic development. In the years ahead, progress on these major efforts must continue. Additional efforts are needed to reclaim the Neponset, Muddy, Chelsea, and Mystic Rivers.

Brownfields sites pose another challenge to Boston's neighborhoods. Brownfields are any parcel of land that has been contaminated from manufacturing activity, auto-oriented services, or dumping of contaminated materials. These sites, which tend to be located in poor neighborhoods, require millions of dollars worth of remediation to make them safe for new uses. The challenge for the next generation is to develop appropriate standards for the reuse of particular sites. Some kinds of development and activity – for example, residential, commercial, and social services like schools and day-care centers – require extensive cleanup efforts. Other development – for example, garage and manufacturing activity – requires less ambitious cleanup efforts.

The challenge for the next generation is to develop initiatives that incorporate environmental improvements into development plans. Development projects for watersheds, for example, must include provisions for improving traffic patterns, streetscape design, and pedestrian-oriented activity near rivers and harbor attractions. Major housing development should be part of an overall design for community enhancement, including parks and gardens. Every new development offers a new opportunity for improving the quality of the environment.

## **Boston is the hub of New England**

As in all cities, the economic character of Boston sets the parameters for what people do and how they live. Sea-based industries and manufacturing gave Boston's people their livelihoods for centuries – and continue to provide good jobs to thousands. In the modern era, services have dominated the economic landscape. Connecting the city and its economic opportunity has been a radial transportation system that connects Downtown with points north, west, and south.

**A radial transportation system.** Like spokes on a wheel, the major streets and public transit lines extend from the city's "hub" near Downtown to the neighborhoods and suburban locations beyond the city. This radial system has served Boston well, but requires enhancement. Just as



Route 128 has connected major thoroughfares that extend beyond Boston, the city needs a circumferential system of transit that connects neighborhood activity centers like a rim.

The shape of the city's transportation system began to emerge with the construction of the boulevard now known as Washington Street. Washington Street was the main road from the old Shawmut Peninsula out to Roxbury and points beyond.

The railroad industry competed to bring lines into the city center. The creation of Boston's railroad network began with the planning of a 50th-anniversary monument to the 1775 Battle of Bunker Hill; to move granite from Quincy to Charlestown, engineers built a four-mile horse-drawn railroad. Four years later, engineers were planning steam-driven passenger railways. Railroads known by the major destinations – the Lowell, Eastern, Boston and Maine, Fitchburg, Boston and Worcester, Boston and Albany, Boston and Providence, Old Colony (to Plymouth), and Boston and New York Central lines – provided the infrastructure to move freight as well as passengers. These railroads would dominate the "nation-building" that lasted from the 1830s until the years just before the Civil War. Along these railroads occurred new industry and residential development that would define Boston and the region for years to come.

Following in the path of the national railroads were the horse-drawn trolleys that would give rise to the "streetcar suburbs." Streetcars stretched one-half mile from Boston's City Hall at the time of the Depression of 1873 and extended another one and one-half mile further in the next 14 years. In the 1880s and 1890s, when streetcars were electrified, they extended at ~~last~~ <sup>last</sup> six miles from the city's hub. Railroad development went hand in hand with real estate development and the provision of a wide range of city services. It also spurred a wave of annexation in the 1970s, when suburbs became part of the City of Boston. Most important, the streetcars solidified the in-and-out network of transportation that characterized the city.

Later, the city's subway system would make the radial configuration a permanent part of Boston's landscape. The system's basic configuration is familiar to users of the "T" today. The Red, Green, Blue, and Orange lines all converge on Downtown stations. Commuter lines likewise converge on the Downtown.

Over the years, the patterns of urban activity that once accompanied the radial transportation changed. Over the course of the twentieth century, Boston's role in the region changed. Downtown remains the central place of employment for all of New England, but a number of other more dispersed areas have played a powerful role in driving the regional economy.

The radial system of transportation poses an important challenge for the next generation. The first challenge is to the radial system that serve new needs, new populations, and new centers of economic and social life. The second challenge is to create connections between the different radial lines with a "ring" that connects the different pieces of the city.

**Water-based commerce.** From the time that Native Americans made the Shawmut Peninsula a major crossroads for commerce, Boston's character has been defined by its ports. Boston became a major American city as a result of its locational advantage on the Atlantic Ocean. Shipping in the ports of Boston made Boston a strategic city. Over the years, as the technologies of shipping have changed, Boston has worked to remain a leading node of activity.

Boston's great port activity actually began 4,000 years before the arrival of British settlers. Indians used the port as a major commercial and trading center. Shipbuilding became a major industry in the 1600s and 1700s as colonists were concerned about becoming too dependent on the British and wanted to develop close ties with other colonies throughout the Western Hemisphere. Until the mid-1700s, Boston was the continent's busiest port, receiving finished

Seems long  
pretty boring  
Are you sure?



goods from Britain in exchange for lumber, ships, rum, and salted fish. After being passed by New York and Philadelphia in volume of trade, Boston concentrated on developing international trade links that made the city a major cultural and financial capital. Boston's growing international status was one of the causes of the Revolution since Britain sought to limit its trade to maintain its own international hegemony.

In the years before the Civil War, Boston's ports developed closer trading ties with the South and Latin America. Dredging of Boston's ports accommodated modern vessels. The Clipper ships, developed by Boston-born Donald McKay and build in Boston's burgeoning shipyards, became the fastest mode of trade in the world. Boston's preeminence declined again with the development of iron, steam-powered vessels in New York toward the end of the 19th century. But the development of rail links along Boston Harbor enabled Boston to serve as a major trading center in South Boston, South Bay, and East Boston. With the creation of the Massachusetts Port Authority in 1956, a long process of port revitalization began again.

In 1997, state and city agencies collaborated on a major plan for streamlining port activities in South Boston, East Boston, and Charlestown. The new port system directs containerized products into Conley Terminal and automobiles into Moran Terminal, provides capacity for putting cargo onto double-stack cargo trains, and strengthens the fish-processing businesses in South Boston. Boston's port handles more than 1.3 million tons of general cargo, 1.5 million tons of non-fuels bulk cargo, and 12.8 million tons of bulk fuel cargoes.

The challenge for Boston is to build on its long history of adaptation and investments. Ports and other commercial systems need to meet modern standards and also provide a mix of other uses, such as mixed-use development that builds on the beauty of the waterfront. Luxury cruise ships and day trips offer another port opportunity. Sea-based research also has a place on the waterfront, perhaps in connection with the development of the Boston Harbor Islands National Park. Water transit also offers new opportunities for connecting Boston's communities with the region.

**An industrial heritage.** Boston never was dominated by a single industry like Detroit or Pittsburgh, but it has always offered a wealth of opportunity to workers who could supply muscle to the economic machine. Even though its base has declined in the local economy, manufacturing today provides 28,000 jobs in Boston. Printing and publishing, fabricated metals, food, apparel and other textile products, instruments and electronic components have made their mark all over the city. From the rehabbed brewery buildings in Jamaica Plain to the bustling Gillette facility in South Boston, manufacturing has made a major impact on Boston's landscape. *been a major influence on development*

Despite strong economic gains in other sectors, Boston has lost some of its most important jobs in manufacturing. The decade of the 1980s was especially devastating. Machinery, metalworking, textiles and paper saw major declines in employment as gains in computer and other technologies reduced the need for labor. Low-cost competitors from Asia helped fuel a decline in manufacturing 23,000 jobs from 1981 to 1984. Manufacturers that could not automate their production processes experienced even more devastating losses than those that could automate production. Even the high technology industry experienced decline, as the minicomputer became obsolete and Boston lost defense contracts.

The challenge for the next generation is to promote manufacturing that meets the needs of a more mobile, flexible modern economy. Manufacturing should build on Boston's competitive advantages – its many universities and medical institutions, leadership in the high technology





and financial industries, a world-class transportation network connected to neighborhoods all over the city, and a high quality of life for young professionals and families.

**A fragmented metropolis.** Boston is often known as a city of neighborhoods, but in many ways it is more a city of towns. Boston's development occurred as a result not only of landfill, but also annexation of independent cities and towns. Charlestown, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester, Roxbury, West Roxbury, Hyde Park, and Allston and Brighton were all once separate municipalities. Boston annexed these communities in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Their inclusion in a new Boston has given the city its diversity and room to grow.

But early in the twentieth century, annexation came to a halt. Brookline, which belonged to Boston in colonial era and lies nestled inside Boston, refused annexation in 1874. The last community to agree to annexation was Hyde Park in 1912.

The inability to expand into surrounding cities and towns has made Boston a fragmented metropolis. Some 13 cities and towns lie on Boston's borders, but Boston has no legal tools to use to help coordinate planning and development with its neighbors. Even though the major issues facing Boston require regional solutions – housing, transportation, the environment, cultural facilities – the city does not have any tools to forge these regional solutions.

Boston is one of America's most "inelastic" cities, according to a major study of metropolitan governance. "Elastic" cities have the capacity to grow and take advantage of regional resources to meet regional challenges such as transportation, poverty, racial segregation, job opportunities, housing, education, and the environment. Elastic cities like Albuquerque, Columbus, Indianapolis, Nashville, and Raleigh have prospered because of their ability to access tax and other resources to address their policy challenges.

Boston works at a disadvantage when regional issues arise. Boston's population now comprises just 14 percent of the population of the metropolitan area. Even though Boston provides jobs and civic amenities for the whole region, it is isolated from the region's resources.

The challenge for the next generation is to identify specific policies where cities and towns can work together with state authorities to develop regional policies to address the longterm needs of the region's many constituencies. Developing a more equitable revenue base for Boston – which provides so many employment, cultural, educational, transportation, and other resources to the region – is critical to the vitality of the region as well as the city. Greater Boston's health depends on the City of Boston's health – and the city's health depends on fairer access to fiscal resources.

## **Boston is a cultural and learning center**

Boston's neighborhoods and economy have been dramatically shaped by numerous world-class institutions in education, the arts, and medicine. Boston's cultural legacy can be found all over – from its Native American excavations on the Harbor Islands to the colonial sites that animated the old Shawmut Peninsula, from the world-class museums and music halls to the universities that attract students and scholars from all over the world, from neighborhood theaters to Main Streets districts that tell rich stories in their very architecture. Boston's cultural spaces not only offer a great quality of life, but also provide the foundations of a strong economy.

**World-class institutions.** From its earliest years, Boston has offered a home to some of the nation's most prestigious educational, cultural, and scientific institutions. These institutions take



root at critical crossroads and then expand or move to create a new crossroads. The Museum of Fine Arts and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for example, started at Copley Square; when they outgrew these locations, they moved to establish new crossroads for the region in the Fenway and across the Charles River in Cambridge. In modern times – when quality of life has become crucial to the city’s appeal as a place to live and work – cultural and research institutions are essential components of the city’s landscape.

In a way, Boston has become a city of institutional and cultural nodes. Medical institutions define the Fenway and Mission Hill areas. Universities provide the framework for the Fenway and Allston-Brighton. Museums and visitors attractions give the waterfront – such as the Science Museum, the Children’s Museum, the New England Aquarium, and the planned Museum of New England Economic History at the Federal Reserve Bank – give the waterfront a special character. Fine-arts museums and other arts organizations define the character of Huntington Avenue – Boston’s Avenue of the Arts. The Arnold Arboretum defines Jamaica Plain and Roslindale. Performance spaces, from the Wang Center for the BankBoston Pavilion, give Downtown and the South Boston Waterfront a special character. The John F. Kennedy Library and Museum helps to define Columbia Point. The U.S.S. Constitution makes Charlestown a major attraction for out-of-towners. A new museum at the old Baker Chocolate Factory could make Lower Mills a major city destination.

The challenge for the next generation is to guide institutional development to assure the maximum benefit for the city and minimal disruption and convenience for the neighborhoods. Institutions that take up large parcels of land and bring in thousands of commuters and visitors – especially universities and medical centers – must be developed in a way that provides protection to neighborhoods. Major institutional development projects should always be required to enhance public transit, contain automobile traffic, enhance pedestrian spaces, improve the streetscape with human-scaled building frontage, encourage mixed-use development, and provide better common spaces such as parks, gardens, and plazas.

### **Great historic places in the city.** More than anything else, cities are repositories of history.

A city gains its diversity by building layer upon layer of buildings and streets, parks and trolley lines, museums and school buildings, gardens and wharves and beaches. The city is interesting because it represents the visions and hard work of generations going back almost four centuries. A true city cannot be built quickly. A true city requires the slow evolution that comes from generations of people with different understandings of the world, each building their piece of the world with the technologies and resources at their disposal.

Over the years, Boston has come to appreciate its history as a resource that is essential to a good quality of life and a vital economy. Places that tell America’s story have been made available for Bostonians and visitors seeking to understand the city’s – and nation’s – past. Rowhouses and Victorians and three-deckers have been restored to revitalize neighborhoods. Beaches and wharves have been retrofitted to meet the needs of new industries and the desire of residents and visitors to explore the city by foot. Old industrial buildings such as breweries and mills and factories have been converted to apartments and social-service facilities and community centers. Churches have been restored and converted to use for other religions and more secular purposes as well.

→ The next generation’s challenge is to continue to find ways of making the past useful without destroying its character. An old adage holds that the best form of historic preservation is actually using buildings. Boston should always strive to use its sturdy old buildings, while at the same



time seeking out new ways to express the city's promise in new architectural forms. Ultimately, the city is as rich as its mix of old and new.

## Lessons of the legacies

Understanding the legacies of history is critical as Boston develops an agenda to guide growth and development to the year 2030. The lessons of Boston's legacies are as simple as they are difficult to address wisely.

The first lesson is that providing a foundation is critical to the economic and social wellbeing of the city. The genius of cities is that they allow space for people of diverse interests and backgrounds to develop themselves as much as their talents and inclinations allow. But cities must help individuals and groups by providing them with a foundation. This foundation consists of diverse human-scale communities, natural spaces that provide healthy environments and places of recreation, transportation networks and concentrations of business activity, and cultural spaces that excite the imagination. The Boston 400 report is organized according to these four critical foundations.

The second lesson is that an equitable sharing of resources is vital not only as a matter of basic fairness, but also to enable the city to take full advantage of its people's diverse talents and ambitions. The whole city prospers when every section of the city gains access to decent public transit, affordable housing, vibrant shopping and cultural opportunities, strong schools, or neighborhood parks. When access to the requisites of urban life is inequitable, the city as a whole suffers.

The third lesson is that the city should respect its history but also provide room for change for future generations. Boston is one of America's most historic cities; Boston's story is America's story. But from its earliest days, Boston's history has always been bent to meet the needs of the future. From the colonial era to the information age, Boston has always responded to changing national and international challenges. Boston's historic legacy – its priceless architecture, intimate communities, vast natural system, renowned cultural institutions – is what attracts thousands of newcomers every year. It is also what inspires longtime Bostonians to stay and work to improve their community. But history, by definition, is a process of change. It requires a constant effort to build new legacies into old legacies. Whenever Boston acts to protect its history – which should be always – it should do so in a way that opens up new possibilities for community, natural, economic, and cultural opportunities. History is not a straitjacket, but a set of circumstances that allow for fulfillment of human ideals and aspirations.

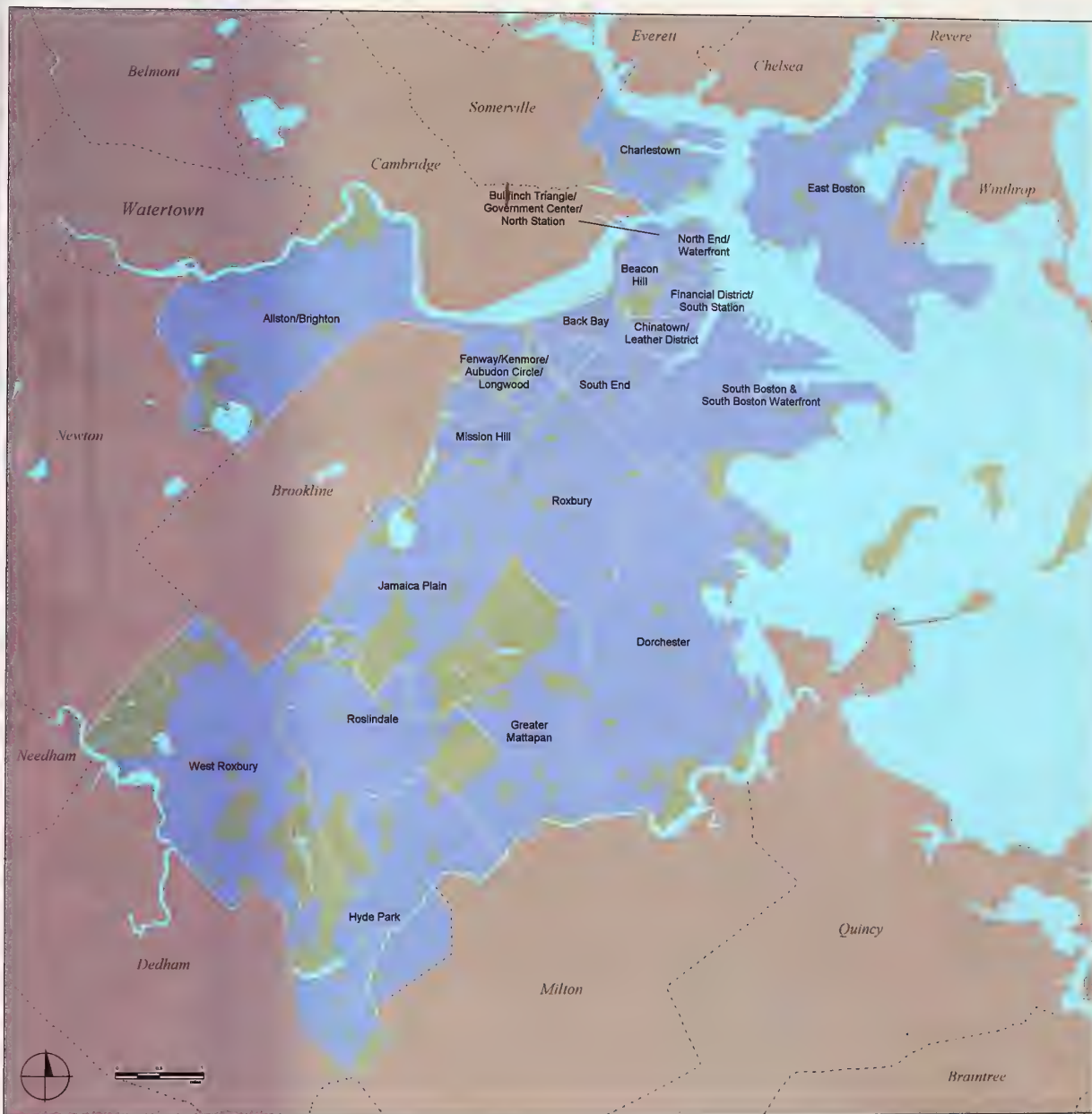
The final lesson is that only planning that engages the people of Boston can succeed. Boston's history has always expanded the range of opportunities for ordinary people to make their own history. Public-spirited citizens created the dialogue that led to the creation of the Emerald Necklace and Charles River Esplanade. Community action helped to create the Southwest Corridor transit and park systems, build the Tent City and Villa Victoria housing complexes, and improve Main Streets districts all over the city. Planning groups of neighborhood residents and merchants have helped rewrite the city's zoning code and have guided major development and planning projects all over the city. Preservationists have helped to save vital buildings and make them the centerpieces of new generations of development. Community activists have contributed to more improvements than can ever be documented – gardens and playgrounds, school buildings and school yards, community centers, libraries, bike paths and pedestrian ways, music halls and local theaters, and public art. The list is endless.



The next generation's legacies are being written today. The hope is that the lessons of past legacies shape the opportunities for future projects for growth and development. Whether or not that is the case depends on what Bostonians do today. This report – based on hundreds of meetings and the work of thousands of people – is one attempt to provide a context for a new age of greatness for Boston.

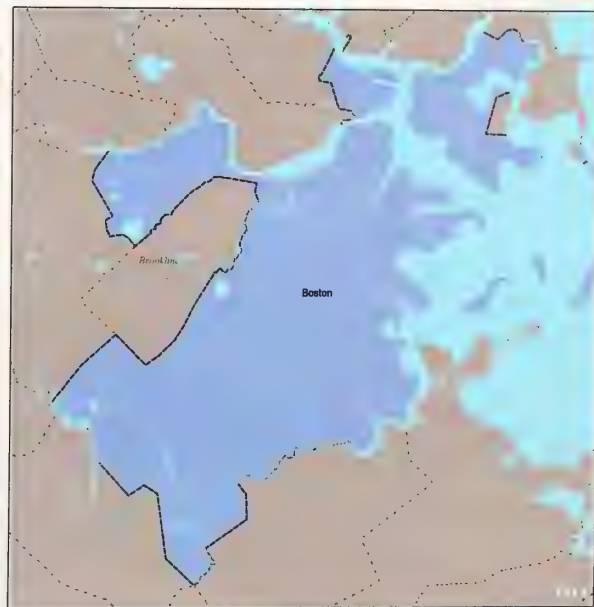
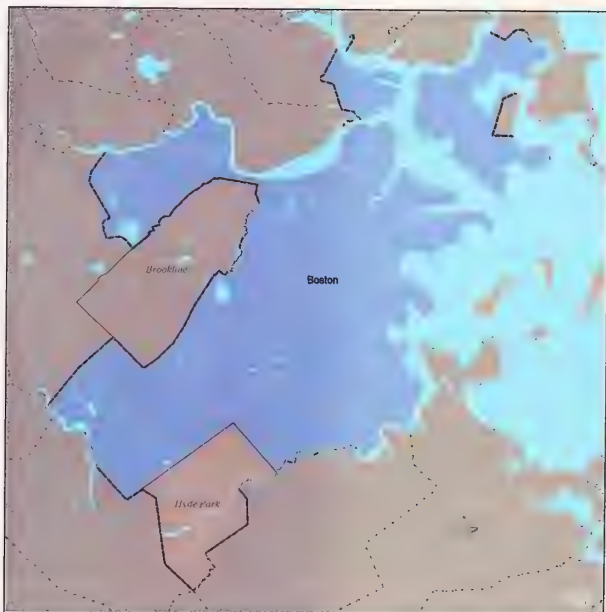
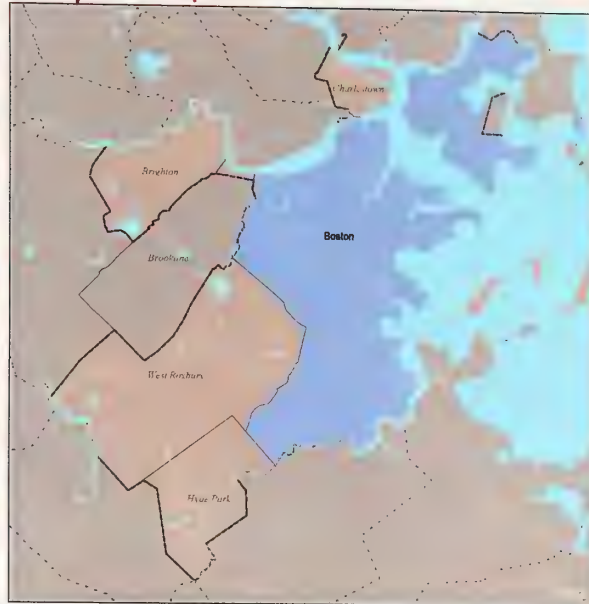
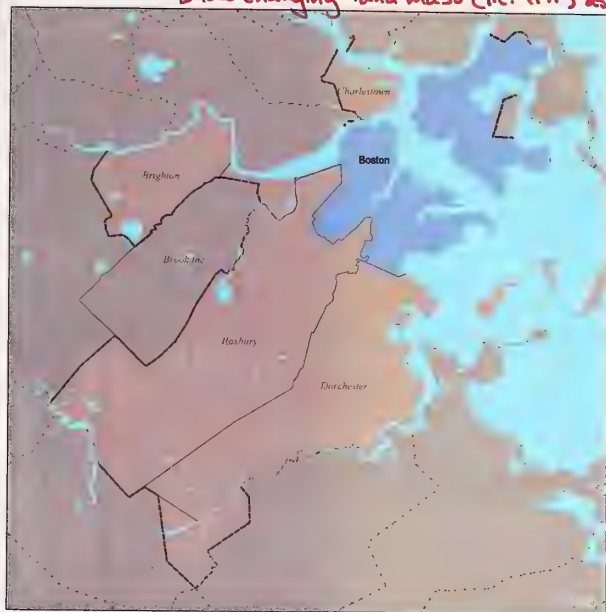




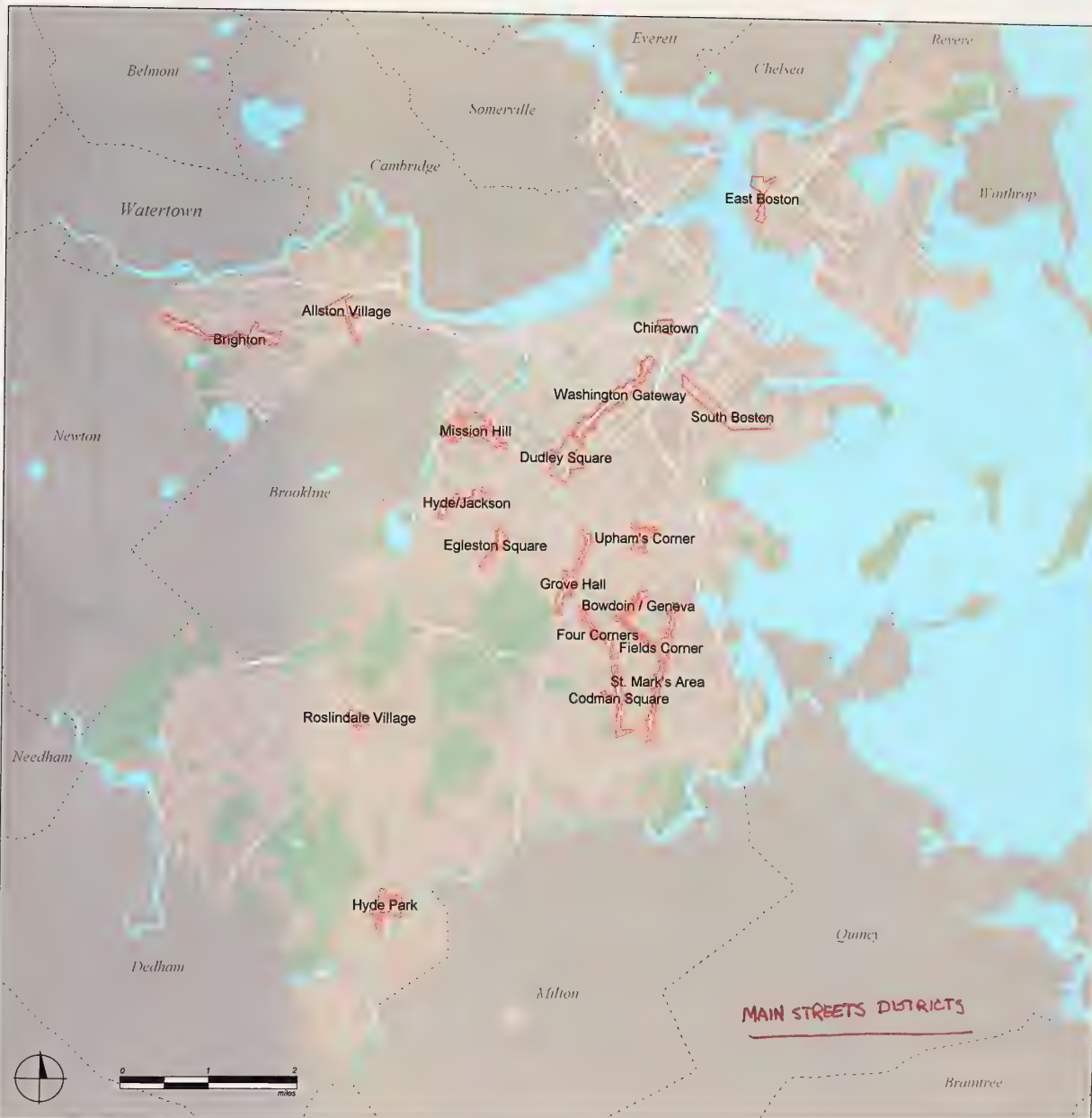


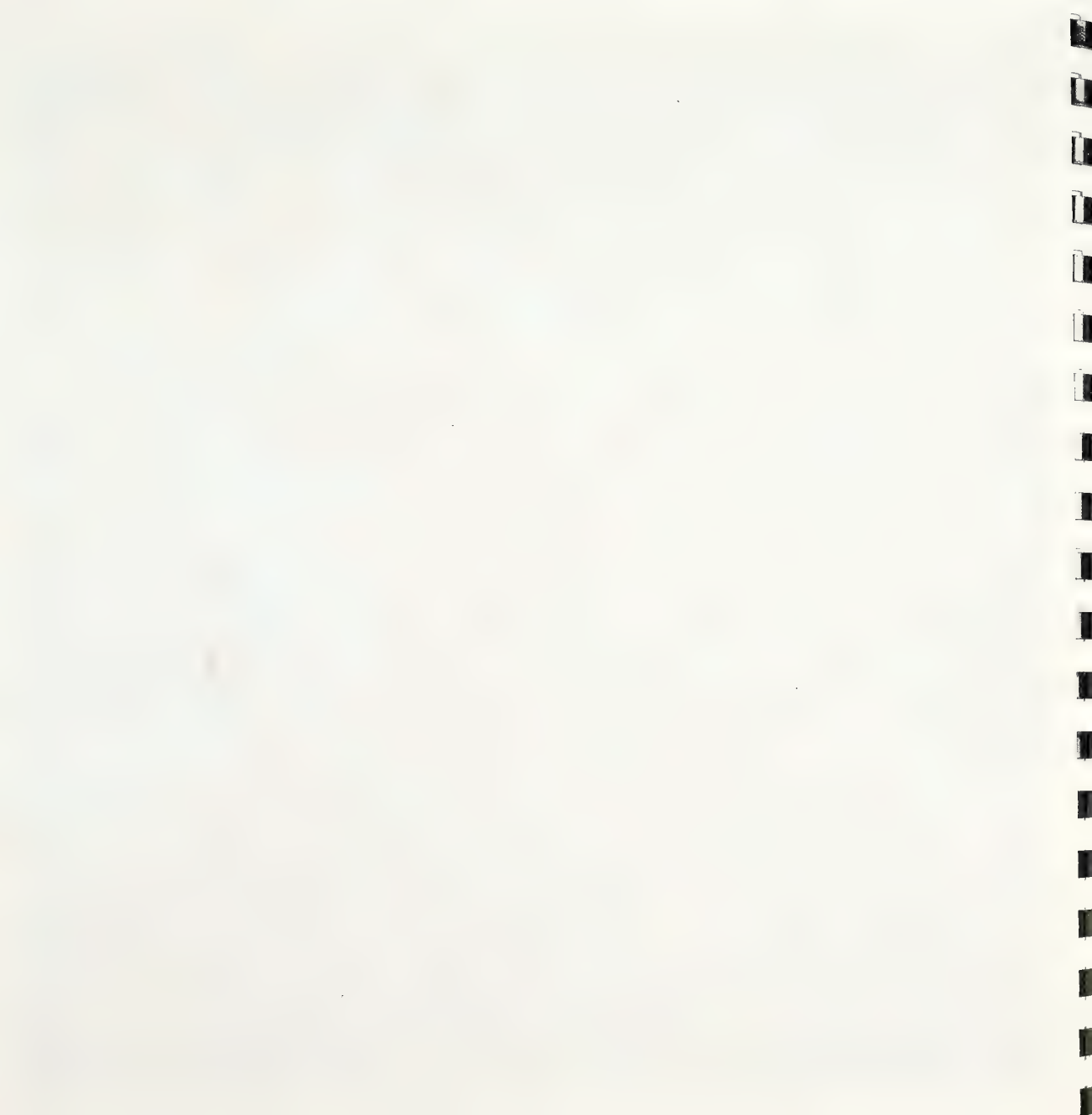


Show changing land mass (i.e. fill) as well as political expansion.









---

# **Boston is a city of neighborhoods**

Transit-centered urban villages

Charm bracelets

Affordable housing for all

Community gateways and markers





## 2.

### **Boston is a city of neighborhoods**

Boston's neighborhoods make up the heart of the city. From the time of Boston's earliest development on the old Shawmut peninsula, the city's character has come from the ~~development~~<sup>growth</sup> of dozens of distinct communities with unique geographic, economic, and social qualities. Most of the neighborhoods that give Boston such great variety and vitality started out as independent cities and towns before agreeing to be annexed to Boston. Each of Boston's communities carries forth the character that originated in earlier days as independent towns and cities, or the processes of master planning that marked major landfills.

Geography, infrastructure, and major developments have always been the defining characteristics of the neighborhoods. Waterways like the Charles River, Neponset River, and Stony Brook gave rise to mills and manufacturing. The Back Bay and Fens were designed de novo upon landfill that was nestled into the Emerald Necklace park system. Charlestown, the North End, and South Boston developed around sea-based industries. Communities like South Boston, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and West Roxbury emerged as "streetcar suburbs" during the days of horse-drawn cars. Logan Airport was built on landfill that consolidated islands in the neighborhood now known as East Boston. Allston-Brighton grew around railroad yards and universities. The look and feel of Boston's neighborhoods are often so distinctive that people identify themselves as residents of Roxbury, Hyde Park, or other communities rather than Boston.

In recent years, a number of community-driven efforts have improved the character of neighborhoods all over Boston. A broad coalition arose in the 1970s to defeat the proposal to build a new Southwest Expressway through the South End, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain; in its place was developed the new Orange Line for rapid transit and the Southwest Corridor Park. All over the city, community development corporations have developed thousands of units of housing to promote affordable and diverse neighborhoods. Gardens and urban wilds and greenways have sprung up all over the city as a result of cooperation between community groups, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Watershed organizations and other civic groups, in cooperation with government agencies and major institutions, have joined forces to clean up Boston's rivers and develop exciting amenities along those natural spaces. Old buildings have been rehabilitated for housing, artist studios, social service centers, and office and commercial uses. Volunteer groups have fixed bike trails and parks, identified new planning visions for waterfront vistas, and fought to improve public transit service. All of these activities begin in the neighborhoods, where people come face to face with the problems and possibilities of urban life.

Boston's strong neighborhood identity offers the foundation for one of the nation's most dynamic and diverse cities, but it also poses serious challenges. Connections from the neighborhoods to the assets of the rest of the city are often inadequate. Many neighborhoods in the heart of the city, such as Roxbury and Dorchester, do not feel a full sense of ownership of the Boston Harbor waterfront – even when they are just a mile or so away from the waterfront. Other neighborhoods feel detached from Downtown, Franklin Park and Boston Nature Center, the



cultural institutions of the Fenway, Stony Brook Reservation, the John F. Kennedy Library, or the National Museum of Afro-American Artists. The problem is equal parts information and logistics. Because ~~the city lacks~~ <sup>there is no</sup> a comprehensive system of orientation to the city's many attractions and events – and because businesses and the visitor industry tends to highlight the Downtown and environs in promotional materials – many people simply do not know about Boston's extraordinary places in the neighborhoods. When they do know about these places, getting there can be difficult.

Boston's neighborhoods face another “connections” challenge as well. Many of the resources within neighborhoods – parks and playgrounds, schools, libraries, community centers, bicycle networks, gardens, historic sites, shopping districts – are not connected to each other in any visible way. In order for these places to meet the challenges of residents and merchants, they need to be brought into a stronger relationship with each other. Parks should extend the campus of the schools. Libraries should be an extension of community centers and social-service centers. Transit stations should anchor neighborhood businesses. Bicycle networks should enhance parks, playgrounds, and business centers. Gardens should become extensions of parks and playgrounds, residential blocks, and neighborhood streets. When these resources are truly connected – with sidewalks and other paths, landscaping, signage and gateways, and building frontage – then the neighborhoods will be more “whole” and will offer greater opportunity for residents, merchants, and visitors.

When improving Boston's neighborhoods, it is important to know that they all need the same basic building blocks, but that these building blocks need to be put together according to the unique character of each neighborhood. The building blocks include a variety of housing types for people of all backgrounds and income levels, mass transit connections to the whole city, good schools and cultural institutions, parks for people of all ages, and exciting public places with diverse activities and a pleasant “walkable” feel. Each neighborhood needs to build these elements into its spaces in its own way. Neighborhoods are organic places that depend on adapting basic needs to particular circumstances. Strong design standards and commitment to infrastructure investment are essential, but also need to be shaped by the people who live and work in the neighborhoods.

## **Principles of planning for a good neighborhood**

Good city neighborhoods work when they combine a fine-grained character of the street and the bold connections with the life of the larger city. In community meetings across the city, residents expressed the following principles about neighborhood design:

*A good neighborhood has a diverse range of educational, recreational, and cultural spaces.* The more places people have to go, the greater their opportunity for fulfillment and identification with each other as neighbors and citizens. All people – singles, couples, families, seniors – need opportunities to pursue educational, recreational, cultural, and spiritual opportunities. Institutions that offer such opportunities should be supported since they help to create a civic spirit that strengthens the overall quality of life. Streetscape improvements, parks and natural areas, landscaping, signage, historic spaces, and façade improvements can help to connect diverse community resources.

*All communities should be designed with walkable streets and sidewalks that connect residential, community, and business spaces.* A good neighborhood makes it easy for residents to



develop relations with their many different neighbors – nearby residents, businesses, cultural institutions, schools, churches, parks and community centers, social service centers, and the like. Visiting a friend, obtaining goods and services, seeing a play or hearing a concert, checking up on a child's educational progress, enjoying recreational opportunities, and getting a checkup should be accessible by foot or transit. Such diverse activities tend to be available in communities with good design. Good design requires streets and sidewalks that are seamless, safe, and comfortable for people of all ages. People should be able to find ~~there~~ <sup>at their</sup> way around the neighborhood to gain access to all of its resources.

*A community needs to have a wide range of homes for people of ~~of~~ <sup>at</sup> income levels and social backgrounds.* Housing directly shapes the character of the neighborhood. A diverse housing stock – with single-family, multi-family, and apartment buildings – provides places for people of all income levels and stages of life. Not all neighborhoods can offer all kinds of housing, but they should offer housing for as many different kinds of people as possible. By assessing which groups need which kinds of housing, the City can develop a coherent longterm strategy to address the problem of access and affordability in all neighborhoods. While housing is fundamentally a matter of providing shelter for residents, it is also an integral part of community-building. Therefore, the design of housing should strengthen the urban character of the community. Suburban styles of housing should be avoided, particularly in neighborhoods with longstanding urban qualities such as density, mixed-use development, multifamily dwellings, and access to public transit. Housing should strengthen the character of the overall community, rather than isolate residents from their community.

*Neighborhood centers should be convenient to transit connections, ~~to~~ <sup>and</sup> places of work and play across the city and region.* No neighborhood is an island unto itself; people in neighborhoods need efficient access to the many resources and activities in the city and region. Public transportation should be the centerpiece of community building. It should be easy for someone to take a subway, trolley, or bus to economic, social, and cultural activities all over the city. It should also be easy to walk and bicycle in every neighborhood of the city. People who prefer automobile transportation should be accommodated with a street network that provides movement with a minimum of congestion. Car travel outside the neighborhood should be channeled into a citywide and regional street system apart from neighborhood streets.

*Residents need direct access to a vibrant local economy that offers jobs and a full range of goods and services to all residents.* Despite the growing power of malls and catalogue and internet shopping, people still need access to goods and services locally – groceries, clothing stores, book and stationery stores, hardware stores, banks, convenience stores, restaurants, coffee shops and taverns, and health care centers. These places have not just economic importance, but are vital to the social and cultural life of the community. Where people meet to exchange goods and services, they also forge social bonds that strengthen the identity and cohesiveness of the community.

## INITIATIVE: TRANSIT-CENTERED URBAN VILLAGES

Throughout most of American urban history, cities have developed around lively “nodes” of activity at key transportation stations and interchanges. All manner of activity – retail stores, service providers, civic and religious functions, housing – cluster around a port or transit station because of the convenience and access offered by transportation systems. This style of development creates a density that enables the area to support a great diversity of activities. It



also makes public transportation a viable option for people in the area and beyond. Transit villages are also more affordable for residents and businesses because they free them from the expenses and spaces required by cars. Health and safety benefits are also significant since they encourage walking, reduce air and noise pollution, and eliminate dangerous automobile speeds. Perhaps the greatest beneficiary is civic health. Because transit centers encourage people to venture into the public realm, the community benefits when neighbors get to know each other and look after each other's concerns.

## Vision

Over the next generation, Boston will build on the potential of its extensive transit system and transform the areas around its major transportation stops and stations into model urban villages. These villages will offer every convenience and amenity of urban living, beginning with an attractive and efficient means of public transit to all sections of the city and region. To encourage transit ridership, every village should provide lively, diverse, and walkable places. The urban villages should offer attractive stations, a diverse array of goods and services, special civic spaces from parks and galleries, and places to meet friends and neighbors. A well-designed village makes the neighborhood a better setting for residents, merchants, and visitors – and connects to the other vital spaces of Boston's neighborhoods.

## Assets and opportunities

One of Boston's greatest assets is its **existing public transportation infrastructure**. All across the city, communities have developed around transit stations. Boston is also one of the few American cities in recent years to build a whole new subway line and is contemplating the construction of new lines in the future.

Even where there are no stations to anchor public transit use, there are many **clusters of activity** that could develop into dynamic transit nodes. They differ in their economic and residential density, streetscape and urban design, and transit access. Transit improvements, land-use planning, and enhancements of urban design can improve their overall livability, legibility, safety, comfort, and convenience. *[see MAP of activity centers]*

The last decade has been a time of much **public investment and planning**. The City has successfully instituted a "boulevards program" to improve the streetscape and urban design of the city's great streets. The State is developing plans for new transit lines including the Silver Line, the Urban Ring; and plans for redesigned and reconfigured stations including several Red Line stations in Dorchester, Yawkey Station in the Fenway, and Airport Station in East Boston. *[see SIDE trans projects underway, Chapter 4]*

**Private investment** is also spurring the potential for transit-oriented development. A strong demand for housing all over the city offers new possibilities for increasing density near transit stations that is necessary to increase ridership and support local businesses. A renewed interest in the retail opportunities of many long-neglected neighborhoods – like Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan – also creates new opportunities strengthening business districts all over the city. The city already has exceeded its goal for building 2,000 new units of housing by the year 2000.

**Federal mandates and incentives** to reduce pollution and encourage transit ridership could also help to strengthen the transit system. The Clinton Administration's Livable Communities agenda provides grants through the Federal Transit Administration's Transportation and





Community and System Preservation Pilot (TCSP) program. The Intermodal-Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and its successor TEA-21 provide opportunities for trading in some Federal highway dollars for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements. [see *SIDE ISTEA TEA-21, Chapter 4*]

Boston benefits from a number of viable **models for transit-centered development**. The Boston areas contains several models of good transit center design, such as Kenmore Square in Boston, Coolidge Corner in Brookline, Central Square in Cambridge, and Davis Square in Somerville. In these areas, well-designed transit stations, and strong streetscape standards and incentives have enabled public and private actors to create dense, mixed-use communities that are popular for visitors as well as residents. [see *SIDE TOD successes*]

The existence of **vacant parcels** near many transit stations gives the City ground upon which to build housing, mixed-use commercial buildings, and community facilities that are accessible to the T. [see *MAP of Grove Hall area vacant parcels*]

The Boston Zoning Code offers the possibility of creating **special overlay districts** that would mandate development that strengthens the character of transit nodes. Such districts are critical to set development standards that encourage a density and scale of development that fosters lively mixed-use districts that make transit use attractive and convenient.

## Barriers and challenges

Unlike in the early part of the century, today's commercial, residential, and community activity is **not clustered around transit stations**. Today's automobile-oriented development patterns do not typically allow for sufficient concentrations of commercial activity and residential units for transit to be a convenient option for local residents.

**Automobile dominance** fosters a demand for more parking, which encourages more cars, which then creates greater congestion. Without a concerted effort to make walking and transit more attractive for people in the neighborhoods – and to reduce overall reliance on car ownership – the tendency towards automobile-oriented design will continue. The number of automobiles registered in Boston has almost doubled in the last generation, ~~from increased~~ from 156,000 in 1970 to 303,226 in 1999, according to the state Registry of Motor Vehicles. More than 600,000 cars come into Boston each day.

At many transit areas there is a **lack of supporting infrastructure** for transit-based urban villages. Transit nodes need wide sidewalks, pocket parks, restroom facilities, places to buy coffee and newspapers, places to sit, and additional amenities such as signage and public art. As Boston 400's preliminary study of activity centers shows, critical nodes throughout the city lack many of the basic building blocks of a strong pedestrian- and transit-oriented community. [SIDE from *Transit-oriented Activity Centers consultant to come*] [see *SIDE elements of a TOD*]

The **pattern of land use near many transit nodes is also inadequate**. Many existing uses encourage or require automobile access, undermining the pedestrian atmosphere. Over time, these spaces must be reoriented to target pedestrian and transit customers. When the businesses cannot be separated from automobile access – for example, gas stations and car washes – they should be designed to provide the best possible environment for pedestrians. [see *MAP of Good TOD vs. Bad TOD*]

**Uncoordinated development is seen as the norm** in many neighborhoods. Rather than considering how the larger social context might strengthen individual development projects – and vice versa – the assumption is that projects are to be judged separately from that context. In



the absence of master plans for transit nodes, land use evolves parcel by parcel and the development projects often contradict each other. Uncoordinated development results in an unbalanced array of goods and services, poor definition of parks and other civic spaces, and inadequate provision of benches and other street furniture.

There are also **public, institutionalized barriers** to density. Many federal and state programs and regulations prescribe suburban-style development for roads, schools, and other developments that undermine efforts at transit-centered urban villages. Federal and state agencies set standards for schools and other public facilities that are usually more appropriate for suburban locations. Massachusetts regulations, for example, require 20 acres for new school buildings. Federal road standards can create some of the greatest hindrances to transit-centered development. The so-called "Green Book," the standard guide for road work devised by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials, emphasizes the need to maximize travel speeds for automobiles rather than attending to the safety and needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. In recent years, state transportation officials have been more attentive to the need for roads to serve more than cars, but the pro-car bias is deeply embedded into a wide variety of programs for transportation, housing, office development, and retailing.

Many **private actors** also do not contribute to transit-centered mixed-use development. Banks and lending institutions require businesses to build suburban-style parking lots as a condition for making loans. Fannie Mae, the federally chartered finance institution, favors single-family homes over multi-family dwellings – undermining the potential for dense community development near transit nodes. Because they rely on Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, the Federal Home Loan Bank, and other secondary mortgage companies to buy their loans, many banks and insurance companies are likewise reticent to encourage people to invest in inner-city locations.

## Actions

### At the state level . . .

- **Develop state legislation to create special financing districts near transit stations.** Business Improvement Districts, like the one proposed for Downtown Crossing and Washington Street, have provided efficient means to finance the improvement of specific districts. Tax-increment financing is another tool that cities use to pay for public improvements. TIF districts, used in 44 states across the country, allow the city to issue bonds to borrow money for physical infrastructure and other community development projects. Those bonds are paid off with the extra taxes that are collected when the property values in the areas increase because of the physical improvements. [see *SIDE Washington Street, Chapter 4*]
- **Encourage the MBTA to redesign, rehabilitate, and develop its stations.** State legislators and community groups have requested that the MBTA begin a process of redesigning transit stations and programming existing stations with commercial and cultural activities.
  - The Charles/Mass General Hospital station has been the focus of a major community redesign effort. The redesign will make the station more accessible and connect it better to nearby streets, institutions, and the Charles River Esplanade.
  - Red Line stations at Ashmont, Fields Corner, and Shawmut are among the most prominent stations in need of redesign and refurbishment.



➤ Well-designed stations like the Orange Line's Jackson Square and Green Street should be programmed to fulfill their purpose as community convenience centers as well as transit nodes.

➤ Redesign should begin with attention to the needs of transit users. All stations should provide ~~create~~ well-marked paths, places to sit inside and outside the turnstiles, good lighting, information about train service, and places to buy newspapers, coffee, and other basic goods and services.

➤ Redesign should go beyond these basic elements when possible to include the placement of public art and places for civic activities like voter registration. Many stations could also offer storefronts for lease. These spaces could be rented at below-market rates to community groups, startup businesses, or social services such as day care.

- **Develop the MBTA-owned surplus lands near transit stations and invest rents in better service.** The MBTA is one of the largest landholders in Massachusetts. The MBTA should be encouraged to develop a longterm development plan for each of its properties. This development plan should be made with extensive public participation. By developing its properties strategically, with the goal of strengthening the communities surrounding T stations, the authority would increase transit ridership and improve its overall performance. Development strategies should follow the principles of the urban village and provide pleasant places for pedestrians, a mix of activities, residential clustering, and strong design standards that create the "outdoor living room" that is inviting to locals and visitors alike. A careful longterm development plan could yield significant sources of new revenue to finance a wide range of transit improvements. The plan should be made public – with updated information posted on the Internet – so that others considering investments will understand the MBTA's intentions for their properties.

## At the city level . . .

- **Adopt Boston 400's priorities for transit-centered development to guide the MBTA's longterm planning and development.** In its work with Wallace Floyd Design Group, Boston 400 will identify three major activity centers for development as transit centers and an additional 12 activity centers for longterm transit planning. The three major activity centers should provide the core priorities for transportation and development funding in the next ten years. The other 12 centers should provide a longterm agenda for transit improvements in the next generation. *[SIDE from Transit-oriented Activity Centers consultant to come]*

- **Establish overlay districts to coordinate transit-based development.** To protect and enhance areas of the city with extraordinary qualities, the City should take advantage of its special zoning tools. In an overlay district, a set of development and design regulations are added to the existing zoning regulations for a given location. The overlay district makes sense if the area has a character unique to the geographic area. Many cities and towns have established overlay districts for rivers, mountain areas, transit nodes, areas vulnerable to storms, historic neighborhoods, and business and cultural areas. In these sections of the city, the resources and assets are considered so special and particular to the place that the ordinary course of planning and development is considered ~~inadequate~~ <sup>inadequate</sup>. Special circumstances require special tools. Only comprehensive planning systems can provide a context to enhance these areas' special qualities while allowing appropriate use and development.



➤ Add a transit-overlay district to the Boston Zoning Code. A transit overlay district would establish strict standards for design and development within a specified radius of the transit station, probably one-half to one mile. Such standards would set the design of streets and sidewalks, setbacks of buildings, size and bulk of buildings, allowed and forbidden uses for properties, standards for parking lots, and design and placement of housing. A transit overlay district would create a predictable context for development, protect and enhance the community, and promote public transit. A transit overlay district would also include goals for density that would guide development decisions over the course of implementation.

➤ Coordinate transit-centered development with the “concentrated development centers” adopted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

• **Define standards for vehicular access to and around the city’s urban villages.** Cars have a place in urban villages, but their volume should be limited to ensure safety and clean air for pedestrians and transit users. Through the Boston Transportation Department’s Access Boston 2000-2010 comprehensive planning initiative, the City should establish clear standards for vehicular access to the neighborhood’s urban villages.

➤ Incorporate traffic calming into design standards for streets in urban villages. Traffic calming elements include street lanes as narrow as 11 feet, chicanes (barriers along the side of the road), neck-downs (extensions of the corners of sidewalks into the street), and speed tables (crosswalks built flush with the elevation of the sidewalk at intersections), and textured paving.

➤ Ensure that a variety of vehicular services are available to make connections from transit stations to people’s final destinations. The provision of vans, jitneys, shuttle buses, and other systems would extend the convenience of transit use to those who live or work beyond the walking distance to a transit station.

➤ Design and locate parking and other large-scale facilities to the rear of buildings so that the street does not <sup>certain</sup> impose long stretches of undeveloped or inactive spaces.

➤ Enforce regulations against idling of buses, taxis, and cars to prevent unnecessary air pollution.

➤ Enforce regulations against double-parking and street loading of goods to clear the roads for public transit and other vehicles. Trucks bringing cargo into the area should be directed to loading docks in the rear of buildings whenever possible.

• **Provide building and development incentives.** The design of buildings and community facilities and the mix of activities dramatically shapes the character of the life of a community.

➤ Provide incentives for good urban design. Buildings that extend to the sidewalk to create a “street wall” give definition to public spaces. A variety of small storefronts create a lively street atmosphere and help orient people to the places where they can find a wide range of goods and services. Buildings with clearly articulated edges and interior spaces, but which are also visible from the sidewalk, attract passersby and become an attraction in themselves.

➤ Provide incentives to encourage a broad mix of businesses. Many communities with the potential to become strong transit nodes are undermined by an inadequate variety of goods and services. To attract a wide range of people, business districts need to offer a wide range of goods and services. Districts overwhelmed with fast-food stores or fashion salons do not attract as many visitors as districts that also offer newspaper stands, coffee shops, restaurants, convenience stores, art galleries, hardware stores, and other retail outlets. The







City should consider offering tax breaks or building-improvement grants for a period of one or two years to businesses that offer new kinds of goods and services.

- Provide incentives to concentrate residential development around transit stations. A density of 12 units per acre within 1,300 feet of the station (one-quarter mile) and 9 units per acre beyond that radius is necessary to create a critical mass of residents that can support reliable transit service and a variety of local businesses and services. The use of density bonuses and creative housing designs can improve the overall character of communities and assure that residents have access to a wide range of social services and public amenities. It can also reduce the overall cost of housing by taking advantage of lower parking requirements and providing efficiencies of scale.

- **Provide bicycle connections and facilities.** All transit nodes should provide convenient routes and facilities for bicyclists. All of the following strategies might not be possible at each urban village, but should be considered whenever streets and stations are being redesigned.

- Build a network of bicycle routes and paths throughout the city. Dedicated bike paths and striped lanes on boulevards would make it easier for bicyclists to get to transit stations, where they could continue their journey by subway, trolley, or bus.

- Provide facilities such as bicycle racks and lockers at transit stations to make bicycling to stations more convenient.

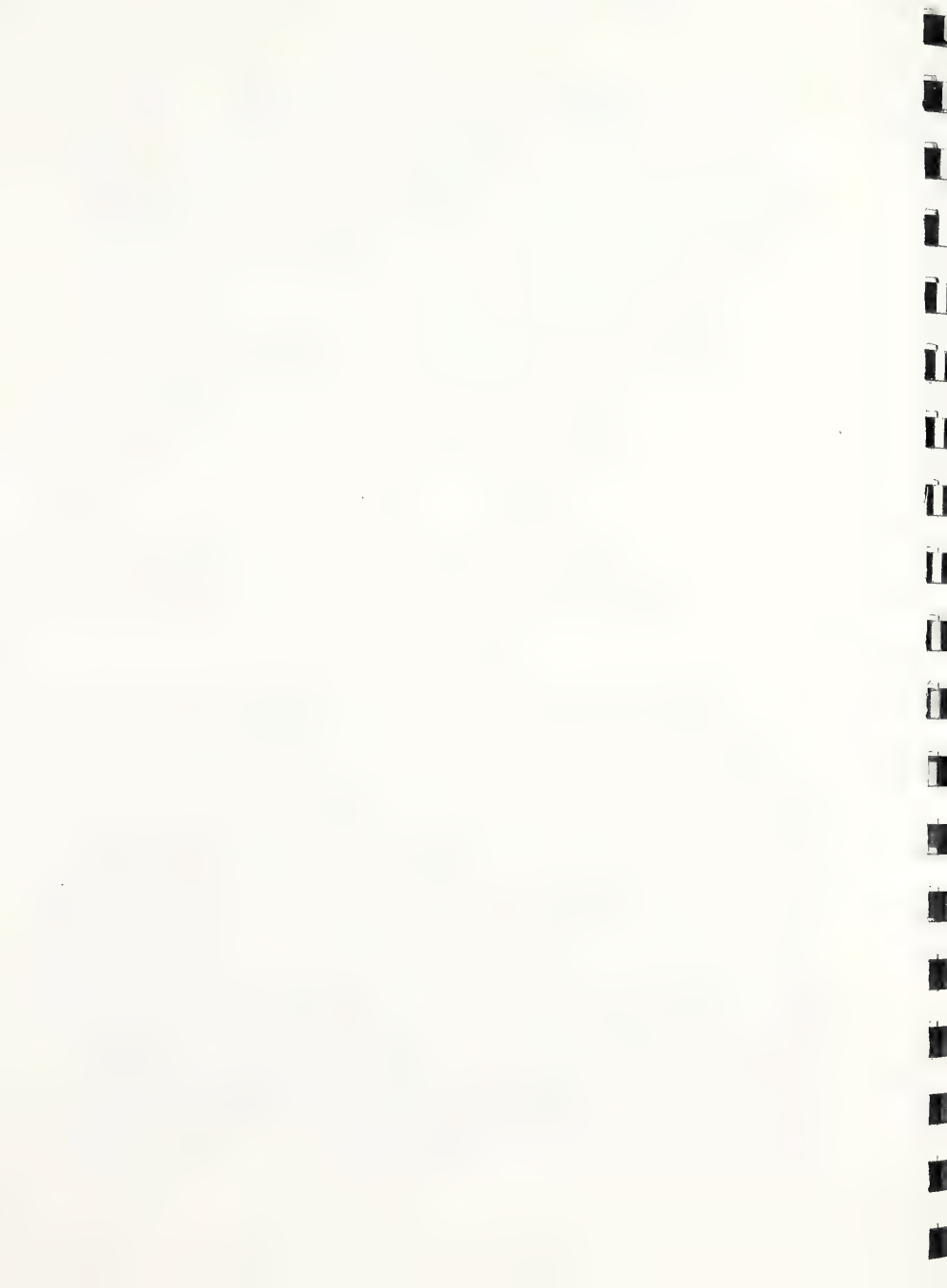
- Integrate bicycle-friendly standards into street and sidewalk design standards. Traffic calming is essential to integrating bicycles into the stream of traffic. Road surfaces should be smooth and drains designed to avoid the problem of bike wheels getting stuck in gaps. Intersections are especially important because of the potential for danger when cars turn and bikes move forward.

- Provide signage and street markings that guide both motorist and bicyclist.

#### **At the institutional level. . .**

- **Establish utility cars and other automobile experiments.** Ultimately, the decision to take transit or drive a car depends on convenience. Making public transit efficient, safe, and affordable is only half the battle. The other half of the battle is providing access to cars without encouraging unnecessary levels of vehicle-ownership. One approach to providing the convenience of cars without overwhelming an area with congestion is the utility vehicle. In an arrangement similar to a food cooperative, members of car clubs would have access to a wide range of cars in a nearby garage when they wanted but would not have to own their own cars. A person living near a transit node could get to work and take care of many errands without a car—but have access to cars when taking a weekend trip, making a trip to a supermarket or lumber yard, or spending a night on the town. [see *SIDE utility cars*]

- **Encourage businesses and major institutions to increase their efforts to provide transportation management programs.** A number of major employers have already undertaken special efforts to encourage their workers to use public transportation or walk to work. Many medical institutions, Downtown businesses, and universities offer incentives for workers and students to buy monthly passes for public transit. Many businesses and institutions also offer special shuttle service from major transit stations to employment centers. Still other institutions provide incentives to live within walking distance of the place of employment. Some institutions even offer free emergency taxi service to employees who use transit. All of these efforts should be expanded. In addition, the institutions should develop systems for coordinating



the non-public transit and shuttle systems and make those systems available to non-employees. These systems can serve as important supplementary transit systems that help reduce automobile usage and congestion throughout the city.



## INITIATIVE: CHARM BRACELETS

The essence of good neighborhood is the human-scale connections among a greater diversity of places and activities. A neighborhood should offer a full range of diversions – shopping opportunities, parks and playgrounds, historic buildings, cultural activities, schools and health centers – and provide connections to the rest of the city. The richness of neighborhood resources stems from their variety and linkages between them. The civic spirit of the neighborhood is reflected in the care that residents pay to the maintenance and enhancement of their common places. To make parks and civic places accessible to all, neighborhoods should connect them into legible systems that show the connections between the spaces at the same time they celebrate their diversity. [see *SIDE Mission Hill charm bracelet*] [see *MAP of Mission Hill charm bracelet*] [see *SIDE charm bracelets*]

### Vision

In the next generation, Boston should adapt the concept of the Emerald Necklace to the neighborhoods by building “charm bracelets” in all communities. The charm bracelets would connect and relate the dozens of special places in Boston’s neighborhoods – parks and gardens, civic buildings, retail districts, transit stations, historic and cultural resources, schools and churches, and public art. Build partnerships with communities around the city to...

### Assets and opportunities

**Boston’s neighborhoods** provide great building blocks to create charm bracelets all over the city. Literally hundreds of great community spaces – parks and playgrounds, gardens and urban wilds, schools, libraries, community centers, museums and historic sites, churches, health centers, and day care centers are scattered throughout the city neighborhoods.

A number of **special planning districts** – such as 16 Boston Main Streets districts, 40 Schoolyards Initiatives sites, 10 boulevard projects, 10 economic development areas, and 7 historic districts – offer a promising foundation for further community enhancement. These programs provide a model of community partnerships for improvements of public spaces.

Many City departments plan to make **significant public investments** over the next several years as part of their regular capital improvements programs. In the next 30 years, Boston Public Schools will either rebuild or significantly renovate each of its more than 130 school buildings. The Parks Department this year adopted its latest five-year plan, which outlines specific improvements in the natural environments of neighborhoods across the city. The ongoing Harborwalk initiative seeks to create 43 miles of walkable and bikable spaces along the Boston Harbor from East Boston to the Neponset River. Smaller projects, such as the new Peace Park in Roxbury and community gardens all over the city offer significant improvements in once-vacant areas.

One of the most promising developments of recent years is the **redevelopment of historic buildings** as part of a larger strategy of community development. Over the past few years, factories have been converted to artist live/work space, schools have been converted to elderly housing, and a brewery was converted to an office building. With aggressive funding and creative design strategies, historic buildings could offer a dynamic way to improve housing and community development across the city. The Patrick Meehan Carriage Factory on Green Street



in Jamaica Plain has been rehabilitated for loft housing and artist work spaces. The Michaelangelo School in the North End will be rehabilitated by 2000 for elder housing and a Freedom Trail Visitors Center. The Longfellow School in Roslindale was converted to senior housing in 1997. The Stop and Shop bakery on Causeway Street at Bulfinch Triangle will be converted to housing and commercial space starting in 1999. The Dearborn School in Roxbury was converted into 42 units of affordable housing in 1999. Family Services of Greater Boston, previously located on Beacon Hill, in 1999 completed the renovation of the Roxbury Brewing Company building on Heath Street in Mission Hill for use as its headquarters building. was?

In addition, Boston boasts a number of **major transit crossroads** that could strengthen the identity and legibility of the neighborhoods through Boston 400's transit-centered urban villages initiative.

One of the most important areas of concern is with neighborhood parks and playgrounds. Under the leadership of Commissioner Justine Liff, the Parks Department has undertaken an aggressive effort to improve local parks that do not meet the needs of their communities. [see *SIDE neighborhood park improvements*] As these efforts continue, it is important to outline the many different functions that neighborhood parks fulfill for residents and visitors. [see *SIDE neighborhood park elements*] Over time, residents should identify shortcomings in their park facilities to develop projects to add to enhance those facilities.

## Barriers and challenges

While many neighborhoods have parks that need redesign and other enhancements, **some communities lack adequate park space** altogether. Although as a city Boston almost meets The National Recreation and Park Association's standards for access to open space – Boston has 9.6 acres of parks, gardens, and urban wilds per 1,000 people, and the standard is 10 per 1,000 – the city's neighborhoods vary dramatically in their access to local green spaces. The neighborhoods with the least park space are Chinatown, with 0.6 acres per 1,000 residents, and the South End, with 1.4 acres per 1,000 residents while the neighborhood with the greatest access to park space is Hyde Park, with 26.3 acres per 1,000 residents.

**Uncoordinated uses, styles, and standards** fragment many streetscapes. The Boston Main Streets program has developed a model for bringing together both public and private actors to enhance business districts throughout the city. Streets and pedestrian pathways do not need to conform to a single standard of design; in fact, such homogenization would undermine the diversity of the community. But some basic standards for streets, sidewalks, frontage, and signage could highlight the relatedness of diverse spaces.

Another difficulty is that many private and nonprofit institutions – such as hospitals, churches, and health clinics – make **institutional investments without an eye to the public realm**. Often the designs of such buildings are so functional that they do not accommodate more civic activities that might improve both the institutions and the community. As health centers have become the common space of many communities, for example, it would be beneficial to all if their lobbies and meeting spaces were designed in a way that could accommodate community activities. With minor improvements, the front lawns of many institutions could serve more public functions. Of course, such facilities would need to be protected from legal liability if they allowed public use of their spaces.

The federal and state governments sometimes contribute to the disconnected feel of the community when they build **large public projects that do not fit into the community**. In many





cases, builders of these public facilities are simply following their agencies' design regulations. In other cases, governmental agencies are exempt from following Boston's zoning and design review regulations.

**Legal restrictions** often limit the options of public, nonprofit, and private institutions. When property owners are held liable for incidents that occur on their grounds, they are unlikely to allow outsiders to use those grounds. For example, many parks adjacent to public schools are not available for class use because of the school's liability exposure.

## **Actions**

### **At the city level . . .**

#### **Develop a citywide system for implementing the neighborhood park plans.**

Neighborhood by neighborhood, over a 20-year period, use neighborhood input and professional landscape design to build or renovate all of the city's local parks. Establish a schedule for neighborhood park and public-realm improvements that require neighborhoods to establish clear priorities for their enhancement. Use the neighborhood plans and citywide schedule to create coherent networks of parks ("bracelets") that connect with the City's larger systems of parks ("necklaces"), boulevards, business districts, and civic spaces. City officials should invite community organizations to convene to identify which individual community resources might be linked into a seamless system of civic spaces.

**Establish incentive programs.** The City should appoint an official to work with neighborhoods to articulate their visions for charm bracelets and to coordinate existing programs to assure that they foster the goal of the charm bracelets. The charm bracelet concept could be implemented in part through other incentive programs. The mission of Main Streets could be expanded to include investments outside their specific business districts. The Boston Schoolyards Initiative could be extended to the repair and redesign of other public spaces connected with public buildings, such as community centers, health clinics, day care, libraries, and the like. The effort to plant 2,000 new trees all over the city in the next year under the Boston 2000 program could be coordinated with the charm bracelet initiative. The Boston Boulevards Initiative and other public-realm programs of the Department of Public Works could be coordinated with the charm bracelet program.

**Improve inter-agency coordination.** To bring together the many elements of the charm bracelet, agency coordination of public improvement projects needs to be improved. Agencies need to develop a system to coordinate street redesign, park improvements, school and library enhancements, and other projects that relate to the built environment. The City should appoint a Capital Improvements Coordination Manager to track all of the projects in the neighborhoods. This manager, operating in the Mayor's Office, would develop a database that tracks projects from conception to completion and would also bring together project managers and people from relevant City agencies.

### **Challenges for private institutions include . . .**

**Improve institutional campuses and open them to greater public use.** Many private institutions – universities, hospitals, health centers, museums and performance spaces, places of worship, hotels, meeting halls – play an important role in shaping the public realm. These institutions should be encouraged to open their campuses, where appropriate, to broader public use and enjoyment. The grounds of these institutions should be inviting to all people in the



community. Sometimes, creating an inviting public face involves nothing more than providing places to sit, tearing down an ugly fence, or landscaping the property. At other times, the effort to open these institutional spaces could involve redesign of walking paths, parking lots, and sections of buildings.

**Challenges for community organizations include . . .**

**Identify what civic resources the charm bracelets should connect.** The people who live and work in a neighborhood possess the greatest knowledge of the community's many resources. The maps located in the Appendix of this book provide detailed information about the resources of each activity center in the city. But people who live and work in the neighborhoods need to get together to determine which civic spaces they wish to bring into their charm bracelets and what tools they wish to use to achieve their goals.

**Work with the Parks Department to redesign parks, playgrounds, and gardens.** People who live and work in the neighborhoods best understand the patterns of use – and non-use – of parks and natural spaces. Working with the Parks Department, community members should identify the parks, playgrounds, and gardens in need of redesign and other improvements. Much of this work has already been done as part of the Parks Department Five Year Plan mandated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Parks Department should create mechanisms to translate those visions into action over the next five to ten years.



## INITIATIVE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL

Housing is the bedrock of all communities. Just as neighborhoods anchor people in the city, homes anchor people in their neighborhoods. Housing not only provides shelter and a place to tend to family life, but it also roots people in their communities. Housing offers access to employment, educational, recreational, and civic activities. The styles and locations of houses and apartment buildings give communities their distinctive appearance and character. In the ideal situation, every neighborhood would offer a wide range of housing types to meet the needs and budgets of all household types, such as college students and young singles, couples, families, retirees and senior citizens, work-at-home professionals, and people with special needs. Boston possesses a good foundation for such a housing system, with a diversity of housing types in neighborhoods across the city and an eclectic mix of housing units – old and new, traditional and modern, large and small. Some 75 percent of employers in a national survey reported that housing is “important” or “very important” to deciding whether to move to an area. To respond to the growing pressures of Boston’s tight housing market, the city needs to expand its aggressive strategy to build, rehabilitate, and maintain housing in all of Boston’s neighborhoods. In addition, the City should make special efforts to connect housing to a broad range of services and support structures. Housing should be located close to transit services, social services, retail districts, schools, and cultural attractions; housing should be considered an integral part of the city’s many urban villages, not just an isolated good.

### Vision

Over the next generation, Boston will build on its impressive stock of housing to create a balanced supply of all kinds of housing in all neighborhoods. This effort will center on two major priorities – development of vacant lots and rehabilitation of existing units – with strategic plans developed on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis. By strategically leveraging public and private monies, the City will encourage the development of thousands of units of new housing and the rehabilitation of thousands more. These units should be designed to fit into the urban character of the city, with connections to public transit, commercial districts, schools, parks and gardens, and cultural and historic resources. To protect communities from the booms and busts of the economy, the City should encourage building housing units that require extended periods of affordability. The City should continue to encourage middle-class home ownership to foster greater stability in the neighborhood housing markets. Over the long term, Boston’s housing policy would be part of a metropolitan housing strategy, where the housing needs of all communities are met with a series of incentives to provide diverse housing throughout Greater Boston. *[see SIDE goals of a housing policy]*

### Assets and opportunities

Boston has always been **one of the nation’s most livable cities** because of the variety of housing types that ~~met~~ meet the needs of residents of all backgrounds and financial circumstances. The city’s housing stock varies according to a series of concentric rings. The innermost ring – the North End, Beacon Hill, and Back Bay and the Fenway – contains almost exclusively apartment and condominium buildings. The next ring – which includes the South End, South Boston, and Charlestown – is dominated by multifamily dwellings but also includes a more



visible scattering of single-family homes. Another ring – characterized by a mix of detached single-, two- and three-family houses – exists in communities like East Boston, Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, and parts of Dorchester. The final ring includes all of these types but is dominated by single-family dwellings as well.

→ Boston's growing **neighborhood diversity** creates a more vibrant mix of homebuyers than the city has ever seen. In the past generation, Boston has transformed itself from a working-class city of white ethnic neighborhoods into a growing melting pot of minorities and immigrants from all over the world. New populations have revitalized communities all over the City, including East Boston, Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, Allston/Brighton, Roslindale, Mattapan, and Dorchester. In recent years, Hispanics have been greater participants in the buyer market. Some 153 Hispanic homebuyers took advantage of the City's assistance program in fiscal year 1998, more than twice as many as two years before did. The major challenge for populations at the low end of the income ladder is simple affordability. The elderly and the growing number of householders who work at home pose growing challenges for policymakers.

Boston's **diverse housing stock**, while one of the oldest in the nation, provides a strong foundation for housing and community development. All over the city can be found apartment buildings, two- and three-deckers, single-family homes, and special facilities such as elderly housing, "halfway houses," and other housing with support services. [see *SIDE housing breakdown*]

In looking forward to a citywide housing plan, one of the greatest resources is a wealth of **vacant parcels** available for development. Citywide, about 2,700 vacant parcels are available for housing and other development. Not all of these parcels are appropriate for housing development since many of the parcels are contaminated, have poor access, are located near dangerous traffic, or located in industrial or business zones, but many are. In order to develop vacant parcels, the City needs an analysis of which sites are most appropriate for what kinds of development and what kind of financing is necessary to facilitate that development. [see *MAP vacant parcels citywide*]

Institutionally, Boston's **community development corporations** (CDC's), working with a number of financial intermediaries, have become national leaders in creative financing of housing, community participation in development, and linking housing construction and rehabilitation with business and community development. City efforts to increase the stock of affordable housing are centered on subsidies for low-income developments. In Fiscal Year 1998, the City spent \$28.36 million, which contributed to the completion of 452 units, as well as 1,280 units under construction, and 1,780 units in the planning stages. DND subsidies ranged from \$7,500 for one unit in Dorchester to \$2 million for 183 units in Lowell Square/West End Place. In total, the City contributed \$8.84 million toward the completion of 452 units of housing, an average of \$19,666 per unit. The City contributed \$12.01 million toward the partial construction of 1,280 units, an average of \$9,389 per unit. [see *SIDE CDCs*] [see *MAP of CDC locations*]

**Linkage money** also provides funds for housing development. Since 1986, the Boston Neighborhood Housing Trust has expended \$47.5 million to contribute to the development of 4,828 housing units in 68 housing developments across the city. In the next generation, according to an analysis by the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, the amount of linkage funds for housing could reach \$123 million. Because the money is remitted to the Trust over periods of seven years for downtown projects and 12 years for neighborhood projects, managing that money is critical to the program's success. After conducting analyses of past Trust expenditures and current housing needs, future funds will be targeted to the areas of the city with the most





urgent needs for housing. Chapter 371, the state law authorizing the Trust's operations, requires that the Mayor and the City Council approve all linkage funds. If combined with funds from federal, state, and nonprofit sources, such a concentration of funds could provide a major impetus toward fair housing in Boston.

➤ In recent years, business and real estate developers have **rediscovered the potential of the city**. Empty-nesters have returned to neighborhoods all over Boston in search of the vitality of urban life. Businesses have also discovered the "competitive advantage" of the city. A decade ago, grocery stores and other retailers and service providers were leaving the city for the more affluent suburbs. But businesses have discovered that even in some of the city's poorer neighborhoods, the spending power exceeds those of many affluent suburbs because of the greater density of urban communities. Retailers' return to the city creates new opportunities for housing as well as commercial development. The challenge is to provide a housing stock that meets the needs of people at all levels of the ladder and to avoid the displacement and price inflation that accompanies the entry of newcomers into a community.

### Barriers and challenges

Boston faces a serious **inadequacy of supply** for poor and working class people. In its consolidated plan to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Neighborhood Development reported that Boston has demonstrated needs for 5,750 additional rental units for elderly households of 1 or 2 people, 9,225 rental units for 2- to 4-person households, 2,320 households with 5 or more people, and 15,450 rental units for other households. In addition, much of Boston's housing stock is old and in need of maintenance and rehabilitation. The units now available have seen skyrocketing rental costs; only in Roxbury is the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment below \$800 per month.

A basic reality of housing is that the **costs of construction and rehabilitation** exceed the ability of many residents to pay. In today's economy, to produce a modest two-bedroom unit with about 1,000 square feet costs about \$170,000. Major rehabilitation of a unit of the same size costs about \$135,000. These facts alone suggest the importance of maintaining the quality of existing units and the need to leverage money from government and nonprofit corporations to build affordable new units. They also suggest the importance of creating an economic policy that provides good jobs at good wages for people of all ages and income levels.

Apart from construction and rehabilitation costs, Boston's hot real-estate market has fueled **dramatic increases in sale prices and rents** in virtually all neighborhoods of the City. Jamaica Plain typifies the price spiral. Between 1994 and 1997, the price of one-family homes increased 40 percent, two-family homes 60 percent, and three-family homes 72 percent, according to a 1998 study by the HOME Coalition. Urban Edge, a community development corporation that builds subsidized homes, has a waiting list of 2,000 families for its units.

**Inadequate income** poses the greatest barrier to housing access and affordability. According to a study by the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, the wages needed to pay for housing and other necessities of life are greater than many families in Boston earn. To provide a lifestyle that is "not luxurious or even comfortable," a single person working full-time must earn at least \$15,642 annually to afford housing without any government assistance. The addition of one preschool-aged child to the household more than doubles the wages needed to pay for housing and other expenses to \$31,782. Addition of a second child raises the needed wages still more to \$38,563. The high cost of housing often forced families to cut back on other necessities



like food, clothing, heat, or materials for school. The concept of “shelter poverty” measures the number of people whose housing costs come at the expense of other basic needs. Statewide, more than half of all minority renters – 52 percent of blacks, 54 percent of Asian-Americans, and 71 percent of Latinos – were “shelter poor.” The public and policymakers need to be educated about the need for “deep subsidies” to assure access to housing for people of all income levels.

**Changes in household composition** have dramatically changed the character of housing as a commodity. With changes in family formation patterns – with more single adults and smaller families for couples – Boston’s household sizes have declined dramatically in recent years. With those changes, the design and functioning of the household – and its place in the community – changes as well. The average size of the household in Boston declined from 3.6 to 2.3 between 1950 and 1990. During the same period, the percentage of single-person households increased from 7.2 to 25.8. The number of “non-traditional” families has been on the rise as well. The number of female-headed single-parent households in Massachusetts increased from 3.4 million to 12.8 million from 1940 to 1997. The impact of household change on housing stock is significant. First, it changes the overall need for housing units. Whereas 801,000 people were housed in 221,000 units in 1950, 574,283 people were housed in 250,863 units in 1990; in short, *225,000 fewer people required almost 25,000 additional units*. Second, the design of the units is affected. Inappropriate subdivision of buildings to accommodate the growing demand for housing units can undermine the integrity and maintenance programs of the structures. Third, changes in household size also affects how the house fits in with the larger community. With more two-earner families and fewer extended families, households lend less of a presence to the everyday life of the neighborhood. These developments require a stronger public realm – in terms of physical amenities like parks and community centers, as well as family and social services like day care and after-school arts and sports programming. Finally, with more people working at home and using homes for other purpose, it is important to develop structures that can accommodate a wide range of activities. Zoning should be flexible enough to allow for a wide range of housing types, especially in areas zoned for two- and three-family homes and apartments.

**Booms and busts** in the economic cycle create swings in the value of housing that hurts people in both good times and bad. When the economy is strong, housing costs are bid up by high-income workers – and higher housing costs ripple to every part of the market. When the economy is weak, housing costs fall but not always to the benefit of ordinary Bostonians. With high unemployment and stagnant wages, people often experience difficulty meeting the mortgage payments on their homes while others have a difficult time meeting rent payments. Many landlords cut back on basic maintenance as housing costs fall, leading to longterm damage to the housing stock. Franklin Raines, the chief executive officer of Fannie Mae, said about Boston: “This is a unique market with very low unemployment and high-income people – particularly young high-income people – who are able to bid up housing prices. Affordability is becoming a big problem. ... When there is a recession – and there will be one – we want to be prepared.”

The overall strength of Boston’s economy creates new opportunities for housing development, but also puts greater and greater **pressure on housing prices** in neighborhoods like parts of Charlestown, the North End, Beacon Hill, Back Bay, and the South End. The price inflation in these neighborhoods drives out middle-class residents and undermines the diversity of retail and other economic activity as well. The housing inflation in the City core also exerts a ripple effect throughout the rest of the City. As people are priced out of their homes in the Back



Bay and South End, for example, they seek out homes in less expensive neighborhoods such as Jamaica Plain and South Boston. The middle-belt communities that once provided affordable housing for families and young people, in turn, feel a price squeeze and move out to the outer belt of the City, putting pressure there as well.

The expiration of mandates for developers and landlords to provide below-market housing – the so-called **“expiring use” properties** – poses major problems for the City. Under the Section 236 program, the federal government offered private developers below-market interest rates for loans for housing developments that provided units for low- and moderate-income families and senior citizens for a contractually defined period of time. When the low-income use restrictions expire, the developers have the right to pay the mortgage and rent those units at market rates. Hundreds of Boston families face displacement by expiring use under the Section 236 program. Many contracts provide low-income housing under Section 8 also have expired, exposing another group of renters to skyrocketing rents. The number of Section 8 contracts expiring placed the following number of units in jeopardy of being lost to market-rate rents: in Massachusetts: 2,323 in 1999, 485 in 2000, 763 in 2001, and 279 in 2002 – for a total of 3,850 in four years. All over Greater Boston, housing experts report that families have been displaced, forced to leave their neighborhoods, or forced to “double up” with family and friends.

Another problem is the effective congressional **cutbacks of Section 8** and other subsidies. Under contractual agreements with building owners, Section 8 has subsidized rents for people at or near the poverty line since 1974. In 1998, Congress rescinded \$2 billion in funds already authorized for the program. Congress also has restricted the ability of new families to get Section 8 certificates when other families leave the program. When one family leaves the program due to its ability to earn a higher income or for any other reason, another family cannot take that family’s “place” in the program for three months. In Massachusetts, there are 62,000 units of housing paid with Section 8 vouchers.

Many financial institutions exert subtle **pressure against creative approaches** to housing that are vital to urban revitalization. Because of the risks inherent in the housing business for lenders, insurance companies, builders, and communities, the housing industry tends to avoid housing strategies that are critical to the longterm vitality of cities. Building or renovating housing in mixed-use districts, once a vital part of community life, is treated skeptically by many parts of the financial and housing industries. Boston’s real estate industry has shown little interest in cooperative housing, which dampens speculative pressures in some large cities. Builders increasingly develop suburban-style houses with large setbacks and parking requirements because those styles dominate the industry in dispersed metropolitan areas. The danger is that the tightly knit urban style of development will fade, further undermining public transit and other amenities associated with city living.

**Building on vacant land is complicated** by a number of factors. Because many landowners live far from the city and pay minimal taxes because of low property assessments, there often is little incentive for turnover or development of their parcels. The built environments of neighborhoods like Dorchester and Roxbury – with well-built homes and businesses adjacent to vacant lots and car-oriented businesses – create patchy environments for development. The lack of community definition or anchors makes new investments more risky than more connected communities. Contamination of vacant parcels is another disincentive for development.

**Lack of maintenance** endangers existing stock. An aging housing stock puts extreme maintenance pressures on owners of multi-dwelling structures, and lesser pressures on apartment owners and managers and single-family homeowners. People who can afford to make a down



payment and meet monthly mortgage obligations might not be capable of responding to structural deficiencies in structures ranging from broken windows to leaky roofs to old furnaces, wiring, and plumbing.

Like other cities, Boston faces an ongoing crisis with **vulnerable populations** like the homeless, people with physical or mental illness, people with substance abuse problems, and the elderly. In all of these cases, housing is just one of many dimensions of the problem. Shelter must be supplemented with a wide range of support services, such as health care, job training, day care, and transportation. With an aging population, creating housing options for seniors will be a greater priority. Nearly half of all elderly households are eligible for some kind of public assistance, more in cities like Boston. As people age, they need more health care and other social services. There is also a growing awareness of the desirability of integrating elders into communities with families and younger couples; isolation from the diversity of the community robs both elders and the rest of the population of important support structures. Other populations also face significant housing challenges. The Emergency Shelter Commission found in December 1998 that 5,272 individuals were homeless in Boston. Examining these data, the General Accounting Office found that 44 percent of this population lived in adult shelters, 23 percent in family shelters, 4 percent on the street, and the remainder in traditional housing programs and institutions. All tolled, homeless families in Massachusetts numbered about 10,900 in 1997, an increase of 118 percent since 1990. Many shelters provide places to sleep during the crisis months of extreme weather, but the homeless problem requires attention to a wide range of other problems like family breakdown, job readiness, and substance abuse. The mentally ill also suffer from inadequate housing and support services; the state Department of Mental Health reports a waiting list of more than 3,000 persons seeking placement in special residences. People with AIDS pose another grave problem. Despite the waning of the crisis atmosphere, the City and Commonwealth face the problem of a growing population of people with AIDS seeking hospice and other residential care.

With an annual college and university **student population** of 80,000, about 15 percent of the City's overall population, Boston's neighborhoods face enormous pressure on rents and sale prices. According to a study commissioned by the City of Boston, some 57,000 students live in conventional housing, with 20,000 to 25,000 students living in one four-square-mile area of Allston-Brighton. Students often fit four or more people into apartments designed for one or two residents. Students who are willing to spend \$500 a month each push the price of a two-bedroom apartment to \$2,000 a month and beyond, artificially inflating the rents and purchase prices of units in the neighborhoods. The Boston Redevelopment Authority encourages universities to build on-campus student housing to reduce the pressure on local housing markets, but even then dormitories can create pressures on communities by "blowing out" their neighborhood character.

**Development pressures** come from universities, medical centers, and other major institutions. The 32 colleges and universities, 26 inpatient hospitals, and dozens of other community service institutions feed a growing demand for scarce development space in the City's neighborhoods. The higher value-generating capacity of the institutions overwhelms neighborhood housing markets, particularly in conveniently located neighborhoods like Back Bay, Fenway/Kenmore, Mission Hill, Lower Roxbury, and Allston/Brighton. Expansion plans for universities and medical institutions represent a double-edged sword for neighborhoods. On the one hand, these plans offer vast new employment and development opportunities for the larger community; on the other hand, expansion inevitably produces greater traffic congestion and often causes gentrification that displaces longtime residents. The Boston Redevelopment







Authority requires major institutions to develop master plans whenever they plan to expand their real estate significantly. These master plans should take into account not only the direct impacts of institutional development, but also the indirect and longterm impacts.

Many neighborhoods in Boston resist the development of new or rehabilitated housing and services. This NIMBY problem – “Not In My Back Yard” – makes it difficult to provide fair access to housing for people of all income levels around the city. Neighborhoods put up especially stiff resistance to housing and related services for poor people, homeless, and people with special problems such as substance addition and mental illness. For Boston’s housing market to serve all people, neighborhoods across the city need to provide a fair share of housing of all types. Shelter for homeless persons is a case in point. The Pine Street Inn in Chinatown serves 1,100 people a day, with 313 beds for emergency shelter and 364 beds for transitional housing for limited periods. Ideally, the programs of the Pine Street Inn and other homeless programs would operate on a small scale in every neighborhood, serving the residents of the community where they have their greatest attachments.

Boston shoulders a **disproportionate burden in the provision of affordable housing regionally**. The city is one of only 10 communities – in a metropolitan area of 117 jurisdictions – that provides affordable housing for at least 10 percent of its population. Boston needs to challenge its neighboring cities and towns to provide more affordable housing in addition to redoubling its own efforts. According to a 1998 survey by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, 48,579 – or about 19.43 percent – of the city’s total units are subsidized. Boston has 10.5 percent of the state’s total year-round housing units but 23.9 percent of the state’s subsidized units. (Cities with less than 10 percent of the housing stock subsidized are subject to Chapter 774, which allows the state to override local zoning ordinances to promote more subsidized units.)

## **Actions**

### **Challenges for federal and state agencies include . . .**

- **Call on the federal and state governments to commit to the creation of new housing and protect populations that need assistance.** The immediate cause of the recent crisis in housing affordability is cutbacks in federal and state housing programs and the expiration of statutory and regulatory rules that require provision of affordable housing. In addition to negotiating with landlords to maintain reasonable rents, the City should create a contingency fund for all programs to protect against the interruption of federal and state support. Such a “rainy day” fund would give the City the resources it needs to care for the people who get stuck in the middle of a real-estate market that is characterized by extreme price inflation – and by higher and higher costs of entry for first-time buyers. Drastic reductions of Federal aid for housing and changes in both Federal and state regulations on matters ranging from rent control to tax credits and other development subsidies create a turbulent environment for housing. Boston’s ability to provide new housing opportunities depends on developing a united effort with city officials from all over the country to press for more equitable tax and regulatory policies, housing subsidies, and community development programs. The City of Boston budgets \$9 million a year for low-income housing development.
- **Ensure that housing is available for vulnerable populations.** With the aging of the population comes a need for a range of housing and housing services for the elderly. For many seniors and other longtime owners of property, the increased valuation of homes brings increases



in property taxes that make it difficult to make ends meet on a day to day basis. Residents who are “house rich and cash poor” face the dilemma of selling their properties and leaving the city. The City now allows seniors 65 years and older to postpone making property tax payments until they sell their homes. By developing programs that allow seniors to live off the expected resale value of their property, the Commonwealth and City could ease those everyday financial burdens. State and local governments might also develop incentives for seniors to move from housing that is too large into structures that provide comfortable living spaces and support services. At the same time, seniors should receive government protection from unscrupulous real-estate businesses that seek to acquire their property without adequate compensation and support.

### **Challenges for the city include . . .**

- **Create a permanent community housing commission to assess housing needs and resources in all neighborhoods:** This group, which would hold public meetings in all neighborhoods over the course of the year, would identify the specific needs and opportunities in all of Boston’s neighborhoods. Members would include representatives of the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. Reporting to the Mayor’s housing advisor, with adequate support staff directed by the advisor, the commission would assess the adequacy of different rungs in the housing ladder and identify specific ways to fix the broken rungs in each neighborhood. The commission would identify strategies for improving production of housing for the disadvantaged in all neighborhoods and provide for greater levels of density when such density could enhance the “urban village” character of the neighborhoods. The commission should work with the community to identify parcels that offer new opportunities for housing and community development. When necessary, the commission should initiate a formal process of community mediation similar to the successful consensus-building efforts in Hartford and Greater Bridgeport in Connecticut. Through this process, Boston can move beyond the “just build more” approach in favor of a careful identification of specific housing needs in all neighborhoods of the city.

- **Develop housing development goals for each community of Boston:** Each neighborhood in Boston has its own unique strengths and shortcomings in housing. When brought together into a citywide plan, neighborhood housing initiatives should begin to address all of the city’s overall housing issues. The notion of a “ladder of opportunity” – which provides different kinds of housing for different stages in people’s life-cycles – provides a strong framework for a housing policy not only for traditional households but also for new household types, such as the single-room occupancy developments, group homes, multigenerational housing, cooperative housing, co-housing, and so on. The needs of each neighborhood should be quantified on a regular basis to provide strong goals and strategies for providing housing opportunities for all Bostonians. Examine the patterns of buying among all demographic groups in Boston, especially immigrants whose investments in housing parallels groups of 50 years ago. *[see SIDE importance of housing design]*

- **Decrease the impact of speculation.** Because housing is fundamentally a finite commodity – unlike clothing, for example, we cannot easily “make more” when we face a shortage – a strong housing policy requires efforts to remove part of the housing stock from speculative development. Boston has the lowest percentage of cooperative units among large cities in the U.S. – less than 1 percent of the city’s total housing stock – which leaves the market open to greater speculative swings than other cities. The coops that exist in Boston have long waiting lists, indicating their attractiveness to people interested in stable rents and less concerned



about resale value. The prudent development of cooperative housing – with several hundred units of low-equity units annually – over time would protect thousands of residents from unreasonable rent increases without disturbing the legitimate investments of others. In addition to coops, the city should encourage the construction of rental properties with built-in protections against excessive increases in rents. *[see SIDE creative housing]*

- **Develop a strong and consistent policy of inclusionary zoning throughout the city.**

Boston's current building boom provides an unparalleled opportunity to build housing for people of all income levels in all neighborhoods of the city. The requirement that developers set aside part of each development for homes that would sell or rent at relatively reasonable rates is common in California and on the books in New Jersey and Maryland. An inclusionary zoning program in Montgomery County, Maryland, requires a set-aside of 20 percent for affordable units in new housing construction. In addition, many cities offer zoning bonuses to builders who develop extra units at affordable rates. Boston could benefit from inclusionary zoning as well, especially in neighborhoods where longtime residents are being priced out by more affluent young professionals and families.

- **Invest in the city's public realm.** The old adage about what gives houses and other properties value – “location, location, location” – is critical to the development of new housing and the rehabilitation of existing units. Good location adds value to housing by providing attractive surroundings, proximity to goods and services, accessibility to parks and public facilities, and the convenience of transportation systems. Strategic investments in the public realm such as parks and trees, streets and transit stations, schools and libraries can provide incentive for developers and current owners to invest more in a neighborhood. The City's housing policy should include targeted investments in the public realm where the potential for developing and rehabbing housing is greatest.



### **Provide support for tenants and other groups that want to protect the affordability of their homes:**

When properties become available for housing development, the City should engage neighborhood residents in processes that restrict the speculative character of that housing. Public partnerships with tenant groups can assure the longterm affordability of units. At the Methunion Manor in the South End, for example, tenants and public agencies agreed to funding and management programs that gave tenants significant control and the resources needed to keep the units affordable. Working through the demonstration-disposition ("demo-dispo") process, residents of Roxbury, the South End, Dorchester, and Mattapan have assured that 2,100 units of housing remain affordable for decades to come and are managed to meet their needs. The demo-dispo model developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development could be expanded and applied to guide the rehabilitation and development of housing throughout the city.

- **Provide support for maintenance of existing structures.** Because Boston's housing stock is among the oldest in the United States, maintenance is a critical factor in providing affordable places to live. The City should develop an aggressive process to identify and assess troubled structures, and to provide incentives for long-term maintenance. The problem extends to all kinds of housing, but especially multi-family dwellings. Many parttime landlords – people who own more than one unit but earn their living by other means – struggle when major maintenance problems occur because they do not factor many costs into the everyday operations of their properties. By developing aggressive programs to fix up existing structures, the city can save tens of thousands of structures – and get a "bigger bang for the buck" in public and private investments. [*see SIDE housing maintenance*]

### **Challenges for the institutions include . . .**

- **Develop a comprehensive commitments to build to student housing.** Another approach to dampen housing costs – and to strengthen the overall character of communities – is the development of a comprehensive approach to housing students. The City should develop action plans with universities to assure that as many students are housed on campus as possible. Comprehensive institutional planning is needed in all neighborhoods, with links to improvements in public transportation, parking restrictions, balanced and appropriate scales of development, and community resources that integrate institutions into the larger community. The BRA now requires all universities and major institutions to submit master plans along with any significant development projects. Already, several institutions have made commitments to increase the number of students required to live on campus. Boston University is building 820 rooms at the Armory site on Commonwealth Avenue. Northeastern University is building a 760-room West Campus dormitory and will house another 610 students at its Davenport Commons facility. Suffolk University has committed to building dorms for 1,000 additional students. Boston College has committed to housing 75 percent of its undergraduate students on campus, but has no plans to accommodate its 10,000 graduate students.

- **Encourage financial institutions to provide a broader range of tools for construction and rehabilitation of housing.** Major financial institutions – such as Fannie Mae, the Federal Home Loan Bank, banks, savings and loan institutions, insurance companies, the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency – have for the past generation favored suburban-style development over urban-style development. These institutions provide numerous products and programs to house middle-class families in single-family homes. But they have been less eager to develop financial tools to build and rehabilitate urban-style housing – two- and three-family houses, apartment buildings, housing with limited parking and land, housing located near and inside





business districts, and housing located close to transit stations. If Boston and other cities are to provide housing that meets the needs their diverse populations, financial institutions need to provide programs that provide the money for urban-style housing. Perhaps working with housing officials from other cities in Massachusetts and New England, Boston should convene a summit of financial institutions to explore what specific improvements in lending programs can build the kinds of housing that is appropriate to urban settings. The City should seek a longterm commitment from these institutions to provide creative new funding mechanisms for urban-style housing.



## SUPPORTING INITIATIVE: COMMUNITY GATEWAYS AND MARKERS

Thirteen independent towns and cities surround the City of Boston. Within Boston, numerous neighborhood crossroads provide access to critical citywide and regional attractions. Too often, these “signature” spaces are not marked adequately. When motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians enter Boston from Milton at Mattapan Square or from Brookline at Route 9 – just to take two examples – they should be greeted with a gateway that dramatizes the transition. Entering the city is often unremarkable and sometimes even dispiriting. Exciting gateways should be established all over Boston – not only at the city’s entrances from neighboring cities and towns, but also at major destinations and neighborhood squares and centers. Logan Airport, Franklin Park, Roslindale Square, and the Seaport District are just a handful of places where an elegant gateway should orient people and at the same time highlight the importance of special places.

### Vision

Boston should establish a system of gateways at all of its major crossroads – both entryways into the city and access points to major places inside the city. These gateways must be carefully conceptualized and designed to mark the transition from one space to another. Special gates, posts, banners, signs, landscaping, and monuments are just some of the markers that would be appropriate to orient people as they move from one place to another.

### Assets and opportunities

Residents from several neighborhoods expressed the **desire to celebrate the gateways** to their neighborhoods or to attractions in their communities. Entrances are critical to the definition of a neighborhood – and residents are eager to contribute their time and ideas to designing entryways that express the values and identity of the community. Already, communities all over the city have improved some of their signature spaces through the Boston Main Streets, Boston Boulevards Initiative, and other community-based planning initiatives. Many communities have gathered funds on their own to create attractive entryways, landscaping, clocks, and other markers. This enthusiasm for developing physical community markers provides a good foundation for a citywide gateways program. *[see MAP of gateways]*

Residents and local merchants possess the **local knowledge** needed to develop the most appropriate gateways. Community involvement is essential to develop appropriate designs for gateways. In some communities, elegant signs might be enough to orient the area’s users and strengthen local identity. In other communities, landscaping might be more appropriate. In still others, existing relics from previous community-buildings efforts – such as the stone columns at Westland Avenue in the Fenway – could be the basis of community markers. Gateways and markers might not be appropriate for all entryways and centers. Community consensus on the need for such devices, as well as their design, is essential to the success of this initiative. In recent years, a number of communities have demonstrated the understanding that **public realm improvements can produce dramatic improvements** for businesses and institutions as well as residents. The Boston Main Streets program has engaged residents and merchants in 16 districts to improve the overall appearance and identity of business centers around the city. Plans to enhance Huntington Avenue’s streetscape and rename it the Avenue of the Arts also provide a



model of how improvements in the public realm can improve the overall wellbeing of institutions.

People throughout the city recognize **two distinct kinds of gateways**. Entryways into the city include Mattapan Square (from Milton); Morrissey Boulevard in Dorchester (from Quincy); the Boston Harbor waterfront (from various water transit services); Logan Airport in East Boston (from points all over the nation and world); Rutherford Avenue in Charlestown (from Somerville and Everett); the Longfellow, Harvard, and Boston University bridges (from Cambridge); Beacon Street in Brighton (from Newton and Brookline), the South Huntington/Huntington Avenue intersection (from Brookline), and the VFW Parkway in West Roxbury (from Dedham). Neighborhood gateways could include places ranging from major business districts like Allston Village and Dudley Square in Roxbury to major destinations like the Franklin Park Zoo and Fenway Park.

The City of Boston in 1999 established a new program to highlight community identity called **Neighborhood Improvements through Capital Expenditures (NICE)**. This effort offers funding for any project that is not part of a larger capital plan and costs less than \$50,000. Besides gateways, projects eligible for NICE money include kiosks, bulletin boards, and other physical improvements that improve the overall character of the community crossroads.

## Barriers and challenges

The fundamental barrier to the development of a coherent system of gateways is the **lack of coordination**. The Mayor's NICE program might offer the basis of such a coordinating system. But that program would need to be connected with more ambitious capital investment programs.

Another potential problem is the **lack of coordination of institutional approaches** to expressing a city identity. Museums, universities, hospitals, and other major attractions understandably desire to emphasize their own identity. But if they are to benefit from a strong civic identity, they need to be related to the larger city context. Before any citywide gateway initiative can be developed, the City needs to call together representatives of a wide range of agencies from all levels of government, private and nonprofit organizations, and community groups to establish a framework for improving the gateways and information systems of the city.

**Cost** is a final barrier to a citywide system of gateways and markers. Gateways could cost as little as \$1,000 to \$5,000 and as much as \$100,000 or more. Over time, the gateway project could cost several million dollars. The cost of construction is only part of the necessary investment. Good design and community process are essential to insure that the gateway is appropriate in scale, appearance, and placement.

## Actions

**The challenges for the city include . . .**

- **Initiate a citywide gateways program.** Building on the Mayor's NICE initiative, create a citywide effort to identify places in the city where gateways and markers would enhance the neighborhoods and orient people passing by the area. Identify two types of projects: gateways at the city's different entryways and markers at critical crossroads and destinations. Coordinate a matching program with community entities that can demonstrate community consensus and design excellence for projects.



- **Develop landscaping and urban design programs.** Gateways should be understood to include more than signs and public art near the edges of a community. Gateways should also be understood as the larger environment that provides a sense of transition and excitement as someone moves from one place to another. In many cases, the only appropriate gateway is improvement of streetscape and urban design. Kneeland Street, the gateway from Interstate 93 and South Boston to Downtown, is a case in point.

- **Coordinate organizations undertaking public and private markers programs.** Call together representatives of government agencies, private developers, and universities and other major institutions to develop ground rules for developing gateways all over the city. Provide incentives where necessary to foster some semblance of consistency in the approaches toward gateway design. Work with consultants to create a citywide plan that identifies and marks the most significant gateway spaces in the city.

### **The challenges for the community include . . .**

- **Identify locations and designs for gateways.** As part of the Boston 400 community process, residents have already identified places where they would like gateways to be located to welcome visitors to their communities. The City's NICE program – Neighborhood Improvements through Capital Expenditures – should invite the neighborhoods to make formal applications to build gateways at these places. After reviewing the Boston 400 gateway maps, the City should begin a community-centered process of design and construction.

### **The challenges for the institutions include . . .**

- **Working with the city, insure that institutions are connected to the city's wayfinding systems.** The City's major institutions – universities, hospitals, museums, places of worship, and sports franchises – have a direct interest in orienting visitors to their neighborhood. The institutions also have a responsibility to make sure that their gateways and wayfinding systems complement the City's systems. Institutions should demonstrate how their systems enhance the City's systems before they implement them.









## Community Development Corporations

In cities across the nation, community development corporations have played a growing role in the production and rehabilitation of housing. Boston is one of the most vibrant cities for CDC-driven development. All told, Boston has 24 CDC's working to build housing in 12 neighborhoods.

A CDC is a nonprofit development and management company. The primary goal of CDC's is to produce housing and commercial developments that meet the needs of the community. The typical CDC project requires cobbling together a variety of government programs – low interest rates, building subsidies, program grants, rent allowances – to provide financing for projects that might not otherwise be possible. CDC's also work with banks that are required to invest in their service areas under the federal Community Reinvestment Act of 1978. In return for public and private assistance, the CDC agrees to provide the housing units below market cost to low- and moderate-income dwellers.

While in the 1970s CDC's focused almost exclusively on housing, CDC's today work equally on housing and economic development projects. A greater understanding of the importance of housing support services – and of the need for community development – has brought CDC's into commercial development. One prominent example is the redevelopment of the Haffenreffer Brewery in Jamaica Plain for some 23 small businesses that provide 150 jobs.

CDC's must work closely with both government agencies and community groups. CDC projects vary in their scale from one or two units to major neighborhood planning and development strategies. Often, CDC efforts get expanded to larger planning initiatives. Efforts by the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) led to a comprehensive planning strategy in East Boston by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 1998 and 1999. A proposal by Urban Edge spurred another BRA planning effort in 1999 in Jackson Square, which lies on the border of Jamaica Plain and Roxbury.

One problem with CDC developments is their high "soft costs" – the technical and administrative expenses associated with putting together complex deals involving many parties and using many financing instruments. Soft costs often account for 20 percent of total development costs.

Because of their need to garner broad community support, CDC projects sometimes take longer than private projects. Most CDC's conduct open community processes to consider a range of possibilities for development of vacant or underutilized parcels. CDC's must address a range of conflicting community goals before adopting projects.

CDC's increasingly reflect the demographic character of their communities. The Lena Park CDC, founded in 1969, has undertaken dozens of projects to transform its area of Dorchester.

Many CDC projects go beyond housing and commercial development to include improvements in the public realm. Parks and playgrounds, community centers, health facilities, day care, targeted recreation and education programs, and employment and training programs.

Because of their impact on the community and use of vacant parcels, CDC projects also require coordination with government agencies such as the city's BRA, Department of Neighborhood Development, and Parks Department, as well as the state's Metropolitan District Commission and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.



## Community Development Corporations

### Page 2

Below are the names and service areas of Boston's community development corporations:

- ✓ Allston Brighton CDC, Allston/Brighton.
- ✓ Asian CDC, Chinatown.
- ✓ Back of the Hill CDC, Mission Hill.
- ✓ Codman Square NDC, Dorchester.
- ✓ Dorchester Bay EDC, Dorchester.
- ✓ East Boston CDC, East Boston.
- ✓ Fenway CDC, Fenway.
- ✓ Fields Corner CDC, Dorchester.
- ✓ Grove Hall NDC, Roxbury.
- ✓ Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion (IBA), South End.
- ✓ Jamaica Plain NDC, Jamaica Plain.
- ✓ Lena Park CDC, Dorchester.
- ✓ Madison Park CDC, Roxbury.
- ✓ Mattapan CDC, Mattapan.
- ✓ Mission Hill NHS, Mission Hill.
- ✓ New Vision CDC, Dorchester.
- ✓ Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH), East Boston.
- ✓ Nuestra Comunidad, Roxbury.
- ✓ Old West End Housing Corporation, West End.
- ✓ South Boston NDC, South Boston.
- ✓ Tent City Corporation, South End.
- ✓ United South End Lower Roxbury Corporation, South End.
- ✓ Urban Edge Housing Corporation, Roxbury.
- ✓ VIET-AID, Dorchester.



## Charm bracelets

Building a charm bracelet requires two sets of tasks. First, residents need to identify all of the places in a community that might have some interest to residents and visitors. Second, a variety of physical enhancements need to be adopted to connect these places into a seamless system.

Ultimately, the goal is to create enough “legibility” to the many community attractions so that people can see at least one or two charms wherever they are. The charm bracelet should provide a well-defined path with intermediate goals or attractions along the way. Here are some of the physical strategies to create a charm bracelet.

**Size.** Keeping parks a manageable size is one of the secrets of good parks and civic spaces. Most good civic spaces are enclosed inside an urban “wall.” The ratio of open space to the height of the surrounding buildings should be around 4 to 1, creating an outdoor room rather than the wide open feeling one gets in a park.

**Streets and sidewalks.** The streets and sidewalks that connect the pieces of the charm bracelet should create a continuous strand to hold the pieces of the bracelet together. The streets should carry a maximum of four lanes of traffic (two each way), and the sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate people walking each way. Short blocks are better than long blocks because they create regular pauses along the route. They also offer many crossroads where people can encounter each other. Sidewalks should contain adventures along the way – outdoor cafes, beautiful art, unusual storefronts. Most of all, the streets and sidewalks should offer a seamless path for people to walk from charm to charm.

**Pedestrian paths and stairs.** Some charm bracelets might include some off-road paths and stairs that draw people into parks, gardens, and special places to sit or meet someone. These paths should be well-maintained so that they are visible from nearby streets and sidewalks. Hardscape is important to provide clear routes for people to walk and to minimize maintenance costs.

**Signage and interpretive materials.** All of the attractions along the charm bracelet should be marked with a simple, elegant sign that describes the place. These signs should be visible from sidewalks. They should have a consistent design and color. At key points along the path – parks, major crossroads and gateways, simple maps showing the many different attractions should be available. The maps that offer guidance at the Arnold Arboretum provide good models to follow.

**Façade improvements.** Buildings should be interesting enough to keep the attention of the pedestrian. Most interesting buildings show some kind of interesting details. If the building does not contain any special architectural details, it should at least offer a glimpse of interesting things and activities inside. The doors and windows should be welcoming to all passersby. The more continuous and interesting the “street wall,” the greater the connectivity between charms.

**Landscaping.** The edges of parks, libraries, schools, and other buildings play a critical role in attracting people’s attention. People need to be able to see into the attractions of the charm bracelet.

**Joint “campus” enhancements.** Many places in the neighborhood are clustered together but do not have access to each other’s space. To bring these places together, institutions need to collaborate on landscaping and other design that makes connections between places.

**Places to sit and meet.** Wherever you go along the charm bracelet, there should be places to sit. Transit stops, libraries and schools, parks, business districts – all need to provide a place for pedestrians to refresh or regroup.





**Protection from the elements.** A good charm bracelet is comfortable and accessible year round, whatever the weather. Bus stops need shelters. Sidewalks should offer some cover from the rain. Canopies, shelters, and provide places to avoid rain or get a respite from the heat. Trees can also provide a canopy that protects people from wind, sun, and rain.

**Public art.** Public art does more than enrich the aesthetic quality of the area. It also offer landmarks and meeting places. Placement requires careful planning. All public art should stand on its own, but also help to define its street, plaza, or park. Public art should not block people's paths, but provide an opportunity to step aside for a moment. Parks should always have a central focus or two, such as a fountain or statue. The combination of shade and sun is essential to make parks useful all year long. Good seating enables park users to watch people walk by. Seating should be interesting and offer some flexibility. People like to move chairs around to "make their own space" Parking cars on the edge of a park is ok, as people hang out there.

**Lighting.** The charms on the bracelet can be highlighted with lights. Public life should extend to all hours, and soft lighting can provide an exciting way to highlight the system.

**Beginnings and endings.** Most good urban places need clear beginnings and ends. Such definition offers a sense of the whole, and show how the pieces of the bracelet relate to each other.



**Transit-centered urban villages.** Provide incentives for the placement of dense housing near transit stations, thereby encouraging transit ridership and creating adequate markets for a wide range of goods and services that residents have indicated they desire. A critical element is reducing parking requirements. In the long term, urban-village housing can reduce the demand for larger and larger units that has characterized development in recent years. With more and better amenities located nearby, people would feel less of a need to have numerous entertainment spaces inside their private homes.

**SRO's.** Historically, cities provided shelter for people with minimal incomes by providing inexpensive single-room occupancy hotels. The SRO's offered few amenities – showers and bathrooms were shared, cooking facilities were minimal, and common spaces were nil – but they did offer sanitary places where low-income people could develop a stable lifestyle. Partly because of gentrification and partly because of concerns about the quality and upkeep of these units, SRO's all but disappeared from cities in the 1980s. But building SRO's at strategic places in the city can help many people avoid homelessness and its associated ills.

**Mediation for placement of low income housing placement.** In Boston as well as other metropolitan areas, many urban and suburban communities often resist the placement of affordable housing. One result is that low-income housing gets more concentrated in poor communities, creating greater social isolation for people who need to be connected to social networks. Another result is many communities are reluctant to site housing for even middle class residents. Community mediation has proven successful at easing the NIMBY pressures. In the greater metropolitan areas of Hartford and Bridgeport, mediators have negotiated community agreements to build thousands of units of new housing in suburban communities – thereby lessening the housing pressures on urban communities.

**Strengthen the "ladder of opportunity" in housing.** To encourage community stability and housing choices, provide for a "ladder of opportunity" within the community. Housing experts have long noted the importance of making different types of housing available for people at different stages of their life-cycle. Housing policy should reflect that different kinds of housing – single-room occupancy units, studio apartments, one- and two-bedroom apartments, two- and three-family buildings, attached and detached single-family homes – are desirable at different stages of life. Every community should offer a complete mix of housing choices.

**Tax-delay incentives.** Delay imposition of property taxes for new developments that serves housing goals and promise greater self-sufficiency in the future. In a variation of tax-increment financing, provide up-front incentives that can be supported in part with the greater economic activity that develops later.

**Equity for maintenance.** In homes with high rates of equity, develop special tools for converting some of the equity for maintenance and improvement of the home.

**CDC collaboratives.** In other cities – most notably Pittsburgh – community development corporations combine forces to put pressure on banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions to provide funds for housing development and redevelopment. By pooling their political power, CDC's are able to leverage more money out of banks than would be possible as separate entities.

**Cohousing.** Develop housing that provides a more communal model of living. Under such a setting, residents share many common spaces – kitchens, cleaning facilities, play areas, child and elder care, theater and TV rooms, and so on – while maintaining enough private space to live according to their own personal values and habits. By reducing the overall size of individual



units, the overall cost of housing declines. The design of common spaces increases the sense of community, provides needed services at reasonable costs, and fosters a greater sense of stability.

**Incentives for community engagement.** Many inner-city communities have improved the environment for housing and other development with a wide range of community-building efforts undertaken by universities, schools, churches, health centers, and others. The Ten-Point Coalition and Habitat for Humanity are just two such groups. By providing incentives for taxpayers to make donations to these community-building institutions, state and local governments can foster the kind of grassroots activism that creates a viable foundation for housing and community development.

**Old-age housing sale benefits.** Many senior citizens are property rich but cash poor. One or two people live in homes that are too large for their needs, but lack the money they require to meet everyday needs. Many financial institutions offer programs that give elders cash to spend during their lifetime in exchange for their property at death. Another approach would be for government to provide assistance making the transition from large houses to more manageable units, and for the larger units to be offered to larger families or as parts of multi-family dwellings when appropriate.

**Efficient tax assessment.** To encourage the owners of vacant parcels and buildings to bring their property on to the market, change the system of the tax assessment to reflect the real market value of the property. The assessment of many properties is limited by its lack of development – so property owners pay just a few hundreds of dollars in property taxes annually. Such low tax payments encourage property owners to speculate – sit on their property until market conditions spur a buyer to pay extraordinary prices for the property. The low assessments do not account for the costs borne by the city and the community for vacant parcels.

**Reducing parking requirements.** To reduce the overall cost of development and reduce reliance on the automobile, waive parking requirements for housing near transit nodes. Parking reductions can reduce costs by \$10,000 or \$20,000 per unit – and at the same time create a setting more conducive to transit ridership and community life.

**Rehabilitation regulatory relief and incentives.** Following New Jersey's innovative approach to rehabilitation of existing buildings, require developers of existing structures to meet basic tests of safety rather than regulatory standards that are based on the needs of new structures. New Jersey has seen investments in rehabilitation of inner-city structures almost double in the year since it implemented its new rehab subcode. Other states and cities have begun to implement rehab systems on the New Jersey. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is adapting the code for use nationwide.

**Long-term payment plans.** Following the model of Japan, where housing prices are so high that most people cannot afford to buy property outright in their own lifetime, long-term payment plans would provide periods greater than the conventional 30 years to pay off their mortgage. Such a system could encourage people to live in one place for a long period, creating a greater commitment to the community.



## Elements of a transit-oriented development

(NOTE: This sidebar will have lots of photos to show how these elements work in different places in Boston.)

One of the greatest neighborhood resources is a transportation node that centers and organizes a wide range of activities – retail, community services, arts and cultural activities, and recreation. The transit stations act as magnets that draw thousands of people from all over the neighborhood.

The land use design of a transit-centered urban village are critical to its overall success. Each urban village must fit the particular geographic and social characteristics. But a number of principles are useful in enhancing these areas, such as:

**A comfortable and accessible environment for pedestrians.** A strong urban community requires a human-scale environment that encourages people to venture outside and walk to a wide range of places and activities. A truly “walkable” community requires comfortable sidewalks, safe street crossings, building fronts that provide interesting sights, great civic spaces, meeting places and focal points, and destinations that attract all kinds of people.

**Efficient and pleasant use of mass transportation.** The transit station connects residents to all of the economic, recreational, and cultural activities that the city offers. This connection should be enhanced with a strong design for the T station and its surrounding area, as well as a citywide intermodal transportation strategy that encourages walking, bicycling, and use of transit and bus services.

**Access to a variety of goods and services for residents, merchants, and visitors.** The families that live in a neighborhood need to be able to buy the goods and services that are necessary for everyday living. The community should have access to providers of clothing, shoes, groceries, prepared meals, laundromats and dry-cleaning, banking, coffee, books, galleries, CD's and videotapes, and other goods and services. Ideally, these businesses also should supply jobs to residents.

**Access to community and family services.** Health care and child care should be accessible to all residents in a way that is convenient to the walking city and transit use. In communities all over Boston, health care centers have become a focus of community life – bringing together young and old people of all backgrounds, not only to care for individuals and families but also to coordinate community development strategies. Child care is important for two-worker and single-parent families.

**Recreational opportunities for families and children.** Recreational opportunities – after-school programs, skating facilities, basketball courts, cinemas, places to meet friends – are essential to the health and wellbeing of young people. For these facilities to play a dynamic role in community life, they need to be connected to streets and sidewalks, schools, libraries, and other civic spaces. Their design should enhance the streetscape; large structures should be located where they will not create a large void along the street.

**Housing opportunities for all.** All transit areas need a mix of housing types to provide the opportunity to live for people of all household types and economic means. A mix of housing types not only provides shelter for all, but also supports a full variety of businesses and services in the area.





## **Goals of a City Housing Policy**

Two equally important goals are critical for housing policy in the City: providing affordable housing in every neighborhood for a wide range of households, and using housing projects as lynchpins to a broader process of community enhancement and development.

*Affordable housing advocates* call for using limited funds to create as many units as possible. High-volume production, wherever and whenever possible, is the objective. The design and placement of these units is less important than the number people being served. Limited government funds should be used to get the biggest "bang for the buck," the greatest number of units per dollar. Housing is viewed as a basic commodity to which all people have a right.

*Community development advocates* agree that all residents deserve affordable housing, but they maintain that housing is a complex community that has a dramatic effect on the wellbeing of whole communities. Limited housing resources should be used strategically, to strengthen the overall makeup and character of the community. In many cases, it makes sense to spend more money to produce fewer units, if those units can have a dramatic impact on the safety and vitality of the community. Building on existing assets and strategically targeting funds, housing policy can produce an impact that goes beyond the number of units built or rehabilitated. With a powerful multiplier effect, getting the biggest "bang for the buck" is not a matter of building more units, but of creating a built environment where community and market processes can thrive.

The tension between affordable housing and community development makes it difficult to evaluate housing programs with raw statistics. If Boston were to focus its attention solely on building or rehabilitating rental units for as many people as possible, it would not be able to pursue home-building efforts that could revitalize neighborhoods – and vice versa.

Essentially, Boston and other cities with limited resources face a Hobson's choice: Either provide as many units of affordable housing as possible, allowing a decline in many vulnerable neighborhoods . . . or focus efforts on rebuilding neighborhoods, allowing too many people to be shut out of affordable housing.



**Breakdown of housing types in Boston**

Types of structures (1990 census)	Number of structures
Single-family	39,639
2- to 4-family	100,155
Multi-family (4+ ?)	107,954
Other	3,115

?



## Maintaining Boston's aging housing stock

In old cities like Boston, maintaining the existing supply of housing is critical to the abundance of housing throughout the city. The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure applies to housing.

Boston's housing stock is among the oldest in the nation. Code officials have identified a number of specific issues that need attention:

- ✓ Roofs.
- ✓ Windows and doors.
- ✓ Electrical systems.
- ✓ Plumbing.
- ✓ Porches.

Maintaining the integrity of these parts of a home requires constant attention.

One approach is to create housing maintenance cooperatives. Operating like an insurance company, the HMC would provide funds to homeowners to make repairs and improvements on a regular basis. Annual inventories could establish a "work list" for the coming year, with funds drawn from coop accounts.

To encourage participation in housing maintenance cooperatives, banks might offer a quarter- or half-point reduction in interest rates to homebuyers. Such a benefit would both reduce lender risk and lower the costs of maintenance, strengthening the value of the property over time. Some lenders might require participation in an housing maintenance cooperative in order to buy rental properties.

A slight variation on the cooperative approach is the public-interest rehabilitation company. Such a company might pool a wide range of resources to make those resources available at lower cost, similar to the successful Citizens Energy Corporation. In addition to providing subsidized rehab grants, the rehab company might pool funds for purchase of materials, hire experts to provide inspections and advice, and the services of plumbers, roofers, electricians, and others who provide repair work.

Another approach is to offer low-interest loans for all home repair work. Such loans would provide property owners with the resources they need to fix property defects before they diminish the value and integrity of the property.

Under another strategy, the Inspectional Services Department might revise its standards for rehabilitation of existing buildings to make them more economical. Alternatives for plumbing fixtures, shut-off valves for plumbing systems, venting, electrical outlets, and heating systems – which would not compromise the safety or integrity of the structure – could save \$2,000 to \$4,000 in the rehab of a three-bedroom house.



## The importance of housing design

*Housing plays two roles in any great city. It provides shelter and enhances the overall quality of the neighborhood. Charles Buki of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation in Washington, D.C., argues that design is critical to the overall success of housing. Excerpts from a publication from the National Housing Institute:*

For affordable housing to have any chance of stimulating rejuvenation or being more of a long-term positive influence on a neighborhood than a negative one, it must be well designed. Being affordable but ugly isn't good enough. Being decent but cheap isn't good enough. Affordable housing should win the comparison with what it replaced not only on opening day, but decades later. It should improve the value of adjacent property immediately and over time.

When we build houses that satisfy only minimum aesthetic or durability standards, we undermine neighborhood strength. By designing streets without sufficient pedestrian orientation, we undermine the capacity of people to live as neighbors and the ability of both the young and elderly to participate in society. By planning communities segregated by single use, whether in the outlying suburbs or the inner city, we facilitate an area's tendency to cannibalize itself. ...

One of the great absences in low-income communities-beyond the lack of jobs, prosperity, and even hope-is the scarcity of beauty. Most of us have seen so much ugly, decrepit low-income housing that we can't imagine doing anything differently. ...

Perhaps two of the finest examples of affordable housing in the last fifty years are in Boston. Both illustrate a public sector agency unwilling to compromise on quality.

The first, Langham Court, designed by Joan Goody, of Goody, Clancy & Associates, contains 84 units of family housing. But the Boston Redevelopment Authority envisioned the project not as 84 units of affordable housing but as a catalyst for neighborhood improvement. In Boston's South End, 84 more units of affordable housing that were ugly or cheap simply would not have achieved this goal.

The design of Langham Court posed several difficulties. The site fronted two avenues, Shawmut and Worcester, each with different architectural characteristics. In my view, a lesser architect working with a CDC whose goal was housing instead of neighborhood improvement would have settled for two buildings, and any attention they may have paid to architectural rhythm would have been manifest in the construction of two competing, not mutually reinforcing, approaches.

Joan Goody combined rowhouses along Worcester and West Springfield with high density apartments along Shawmut, linking them with a breathtaking interior courtyard connected by arches adjacent to the rowhouses. The elegance is unmistakable. Walking north along Worcester, the townhouses are a continuation of the existing form, which connect seamlessly to the higher density segment along Shawmut. It is impossible to recognize Langham Court as affordable housing for low-income people, and the structures reflect the redevelopment agency's goal of using an affordable housing project to stimulate neighborhood improvement.

Also in Boston, the Charlestown Navy Yard Rowhouses are, in my opinion, the best example of the design excellence in affordable housing in the United States, worthy of serious discussion at a national level. Built in an old navy yard, this mixed-income project provides both market rate units and housing affordable to low-income people. The project succeeds architecturally and, more importantly, in the way it balances competing private and public interests to the substantial benefit of both. ...





## One community designs its Charm Bracelet

The idea of the charm bracelet – a series of civic spaces connected through landscaping, signage, and strong streetscape design – emerged in Boston 400 community meetings in several different neighborhoods. But it was at a meeting in Mission Hill where residents actually mapped out a vision for their own bracelet.

Mission Hill possesses an abundance of great parks, gardens, schools, and other civic spaces. But many of these places are invisible and unapproachable to many residents and visitors. By using the many different design tools available for urban communities, these places can be made much more visible and accessible for all. Here are the civic sites identified by residents and merchants of Mission Hill for the creation of a charm bracelet in their community.

1. The portal to Mission Hill is **Brigham Circle**. With the growing dominance of the automobile, Brigham Circle has lost its character as a traditional town center. But community efforts to build a new mixed-use development and park at the Ledge Site offer new possibilities for recentering the community. Residents have called for connections between the Brigham and Women's Hospital's inviting green to the proposed new Ledge Site development.
2. The **Longwood Medical and Academic Area** is the second largest employment center in Massachusetts after Downtown Boston. Longwood's thousands of workers offer a strong market for a wide range of goods and services in the area.
3. The smallest historic district in the City of Boston, the **Mission Hill Triangle Historic District's** architecture, exemplified by Wigglesworth Street, combines the stateliness of the South End with the intimacy of Beacon Hill. Being so small, institutional development easily encroaches upon the area from Huntington Avenue, Longwood, and Tremont Street. Future development should respect the integrity of this architectural treasure by with appropriate scale and design.
4. Anchored by Brigham Circle and Roxbury Crossing, **Tremont Street** is Mission Hill's Main Street. Lined with retail shops interspersed with homes and apartments and benefits from a pedestrian-friendly design, Tremont struggles to deal with high traffic volumes and speeds. The Boston Transportation Department is studying the possibility of redirecting traffic to parallel streets. Reconstructed under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Hope IV program, Mission Main will offer a variety of civic spaces as well as a stronger stock of housing.
5. The **Mission Church** is a landmark for the whole community. As well as providing religious programs and housing for the elderly, the church offers space for a wide variety of community activities.
6. Right next to the Mission Church, the **Mission Hill Playground** is the geographic center of a cluster of community resources. But the design of this area undermines the connections between the playground, the Parker Hill branch of the Boston Public Library, the community center, the church, and the nearby schools. Redesigning automobile access, eliminating fences between the facilities, and adding pathways with better sightlines would greatly improve the connections among these resources.
7. Anchoring Tremont Street and providing reliable and convenient access to Downtown Boston and Forest Hills, the **Roxbury Crossing T station** has the potential to support strong development and connect to local resources. Located across from Roxbury Community College, the Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center, and several public schools, Roxbury Crossing is an ideal location for mixed-use development that combines small-scale retail businesses with housing.



8. Running along the entire eastern edge of the neighborhood, the **Southwest Corridor** provides a place for many recreational activities in addition to multi-modal transportation access via the Orange Line subway, and dedicated pedestrian and bicycle paths.

9. The **Gibbons Playground** and nearby community gardens provide a place for neighbors to stop for a brief pause in the daily rounds.

10. At a critical edge between Mission Hill and Jackson Square, **General Heath Square's** redesign has the potential to offer a landmark for people arriving from Columbus Avenue, the Southwest Corridor, and Heath Street. With a careful strategy of "traffic calming" to slow traffic and make the area safer for the pedestrians and bicyclists, Heath Square could become a critical neighborhood node.

11. A redesign of adjoining **Parker Street**, which overlooks the historic brewery buildings, could provide a strong pedestrian connection to McLaughlin Playground.

12. Residents have suggested that improvements be made to **McLaughlin Park** to make it their "Boston Common." McLaughlin could accommodate both active and passive recreation for people of all ages and backgrounds. The park's terraces, existing pathways, and spectacular skyline views provide an excellent base for a redesign that accommodates numerous active uses and takes advantage of the park's hilltop location. Nearby New England Baptist Hospital is an architectural treasure as well as the owner of the Meadow, a popular urban wild.

13. The **Hayden Street steps** once provided access between Heath Street and Lawn Street. The steps were closed off a number of years ago and have become overgrown and impassible. Residents have called for the steps to be restored to bring back a treasured pathway.

14. Recently reconstructed through the Boston Schoolyards Initiative, **the Hennigan School and Community Center** offers a safe place for children of all ages to play.

15. The nearby **Jefferson Playground** is literally off the beaten path and requires a better connection to lead passersby from Heath Street.

16. The **Heath Street "T" stop**, the terminus for the E-branch of the Green Line trolley, has the potential to provide a pedestrian-friendly and active public space. Defining the edges of the Veterans Administration Hospital, providing pedestrian-friendly amenities, and redesigning the station itself would greatly improve the station and its surroundings.

17. The **Back of the Hill Urban Wild** lies near the Bricklayers housing development on Heath Street, just off South Huntington Avenue.

18. An important gateway to Mission Hill, Boston, and the Emerald Necklace, the **intersection of Huntington and South Huntington Avenues** is currently disorienting and unattractive to residents and visitors. To become one of the city's great gateways, this intersection needs public realm improvements and infill development that make strong connections to the Emerald Necklace, Brigham Circle, and the Avenue of the Arts.



## Elements of a neighborhood park

The neighborhood park is a critical element in the overall design of the charm bracelet.

Neighborhood parks must do three things well – attract people, engage users, and connect with nearby community spaces and activities. Parks should be pleasant places for all people at all times.

Here are some principles of small park design that neighborhoods should consider when designing parks as key elements of charm bracelets:

**Gateways** – Entering the park should always be an event – a moment that helps make a transition from the world of urban life to the world of nature and recreation. Good gateways provide a focal point that attracts people from the outside and orients people into the park.

**Access** – Parks should be accessible — for all people, regardless of abilities — from all different directions. People need to be able to enter on one side and leave on another. Many entrances and paths provide the most important element in any public space: choice.

**Edges** – The periphery of a civic space marks clear boundaries, and at the same time connects that space to the surrounding area. The best edges enable people to see inside and outside when they want, but also separate themselves so they can concentrate on what they are doing.

**Articulation of space** – Parks exist for many different reasons, and the spaces inside a park should make it clear what some of the options are. Here you can sit with a friend, there you can take a walk or jog, over there you can watch kids climb on play equipment.

**Seating areas** – Parks should be full of places to sit. If people can find respite, even if for just a few minutes, they are likely to be pulled into the life of the park. Chairs, benches, ledges, rocks, picnic tables, fences, play equipment, and trees all offer places to sit or lean.

**Play and other outdoors equipment** – Children need to exercise their limbs and lungs. Well-designed play equipment offers kids a place to play alone or in groups of two or more. Parents need a place to sit and watch.

**Lighting** – Many parks are off-limits after dark. But well-designed lighting can help extend the park's usable time by hours. Many parks have playing fields, bandstands, and other facilities for public events that occur after dark, and lighting is essential to make it all work.

**Paths** – Well-designed paths should bring the user from one significant point to another. Wherever you are along a path, you should be able to see the another major focal point. Paths constructed with hard surfaces protect walkers from mud and dust and allow easy maintenance.

**Protection from the elements** – On hot days, people need shade. On cold days, they need exposure to the sun and protection from the wind. All parks should offer gradations of exposure to the sun, wind, rain, and snow. Trees provide the best canopy. Well-designed paths protect from puddles.

**Monuments and art** – The obvious purpose of monuments and art is to provide delight and education to the viewer, and to express civic and aesthetic ideals. A less obvious purpose is to serve as landmarks to orient people to the park's different spaces. They also offer great meeting places.

**Amenities** – Drinking fountains, bulletin boards, toilets, and pushcarts all provide people with the “extras” they need to make a visit to the park comfortable. Each of these amenities should have a strict program of maintenance.



**Accessibility for the disabled** – Parks are the ultimate public places, and so they must be accessible to everyone. People with disabilities have as much need to get outdoors in civic spaces as anyone else. Parks should invite handicapped people as generously as they invite everyone else in the community.





## **Recent improvements to the City's neighborhood parks**

The City of Boston has directed a \$120-million, ten-year capital rehabilitation campaign that has transformed a once derelict park system into an attractive asset – one that has helped underpin the City's ongoing revitalization. The Parks Department has worked with neighborhood residents to create new parks, renovate existing ones, and continue the restoration of the famed Emerald Necklace and other historic parks.

Here are a few of the more recent projects in that ten-year campaign.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**

East Boston Stadium at East Boston Memorial Park underwent \$1.7 million in improvements and was named James A. Sartori Stadium in honor of the late chief probation officer for East Boston District Court. This state-of-the-art athletic facility features the city's first artificial turf soccer and football field, a completely resurfaced six-lane running track, a multi-event pole vault/shot put/discus/long jump area, a new scoreboard, three new flagpoles, new timing equipment, and improved drainage systems. The artificial turf installed at the stadium is Diamond 12, the same product used by professional and collegiate sports facilities.

The South End's Ringgold Park was renovated to reflect the current needs and wishes of the surrounding community. A full-scale basketball court that once dominated the site has been replaced by a more inclusive and intergenerational balance of recreational facilities including state-of-the-art play lots for children, a half-court basketball facility, and expanded walkways, seating, and landscaping. In keeping with the neighborhood's historic character, lighting, fencing, and site furnishings were developed with a Victorian theme.

The recently renovated Doherty Playground in Charlestown is one of several Olmsted-designed parks that lie outside of the Emerald Necklace. Located on steep topography in a highly dense inner core neighborhood, this historic park's signature granite and stone stairways, sinuous pathways, and billowy masses of shrubs was renovated with assistance from the state Urban Self-Help program. Together with matching funds from the City Capital Improvement Program, this grant helped accelerate the original historic restoration construction schedule of this scenic park.

Copp's Hill Terrace, the North End park created by Olmsted associate Charles Eliot, features a medieval terrace with massive walls, steps, and wrought iron crenellation. This outstanding overlook to the harbor and the U.S.S. Constitution was renovated with over \$480,000, earmarked to rebuild walls and stairways and plant new trees.

In Dorchester, the Parks Department improved the pathways and landscape of Savin Hill. First used as a Revolutionary War lookout site, Savin Hill still offers a commanding view of the Outer Harbor. This first phase restoration was based on previous master planning work completed in 1995. Similar improvements were made to McLaughlin Playground on Mission Hill, where a first phase restoration of the "vertical meadow" established new plantings to stabilize the steep slope and offer seasonal interest and wildlife habitat along Fisher Avenue. Pedestrian pathway restorations has also begun.

### **IMPROVEMENTS IN THE EMERALD NECKLACE**

The Boston Common Frog Pond four-season recreational facility has both illuminated and animated a previously dark corner of the park. Featuring a 16,000-square-foot ice skating surface operable in temperatures up to 55 degrees, the Frog Pond welcomes visitors with a new



pavilion housing concessions, Zamboni storage, rest rooms, an office, and a warming area for skaters. The facility opened on January 24, 1997.

This \$4-million facility was a high priority of the Mayor to provide recreational activities to children and enhance the economic potential of the downtown. In early summer the Frog Pond converts for warm weather use into a wading pool with a 70-foot-high spray fountain, while in spring and fall it acts as a shallow reflecting pool. During the 1997-98 season, the Frog Pond rink averaged 7,400 skaters per week. Of the skaters surveyed, 57 percent were from Boston, 32 percent from other towns and cities in Massachusetts, and the remaining 11 percent were visitors from other parts of the United States and from countries around the world.

As part of continuing the revitalization of America's oldest public open space, the City also restored Boston Common's historic Parkman Bandstand. A landmark since its construction in 1912, the bandstand was named in honor of George F. Parkman (1823-1908), a Boston philanthropist who willed \$5 million for improvements to Boston's parks. A neoclassical pavilion constructed of a granite base with a terrazzo floor and pink marble columns, cornice, and dome, Parkman Bandstand underwent \$1 million in improvements to the surrounding lawn, benches, drainage systems, tree plantings, and brick pathways. The City of Boston celebrated the beloved building's return to active use by presenting the six-week-long Parkman Bandstand Performing Arts Festival in partnership with Emerson College.

The Abbey Group's pending development of the Sears Building in the Fenway returned a long-lost piece of the Emerald Necklace. In March of 1998, the former Sears parking lot was re-deeded to the City of Boston by Sears, Roebuck and Co. as part of the redevelopment of the landmark art deco building on the corner of Brookline Avenue and Park Drive. With great media fanfare, the parking lot pavement was removed and grass and trees installed to celebrate this monumental reconnection of the Necklace.

In the Back Bay Fens, Mother's Rest was transformed from a traditional design providing benches, shade and a view for "motherhood relief," to a contemporary children's play lot circumscribed by a vine-covered fence and punctuated with two ornamental gates which feature architectural ivy. For access to the site, a new granite stairway with a fanciful ornamental handrail was created, modeled after the Olmsted-designed pathways and railings at Niagara Falls, New York.

Further south in the Olmsted Park section of the Necklace, the Department created a cedar boardwalk along the Perkins Street end of the park. This new walk allows for perambulation along the edge of Wards Pond – further improving the Necklace's "connectedness" – and offers a close-up look at pond and wetland plant species.

Two prominent places in Franklin Park received a renewed look. The historic ruin at Schoolmaster Hill, named after poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, was fully stabilized, cleaned, and enhanced with historic plantings. A dedication to celebrate the completion of this work featured a reading of Emerson by local actor and narrator Will Lyman, including the appropriate quotation: "The health of the eye seems to demand a horizon."

From the promontory of Schoolmaster Hill, the new 10,000-square-foot Franklin Park Golf Clubhouse can be seen. Opened on October 14, 1998, the \$3.4 million clubhouse celebrates the citizen golfer – the men and women who worked hard for many years to revive the public golf course in the heart of the city. The clubhouse features a shingled exterior, granite foundation, soaring cathedral ceiling, wood-burning fireplace, custom trophy cases, storage for 70 golf carts, men's and women's locker rooms with showers and changing areas, function room, pro shop, full professional kitchen, and landscaping including new sod, trees, shrubs, pathways, and an



outdoor patio with seating for 32. Funding was provided by the City Capital Improvement Program, and the project administered through a collaborative effort of the Department of Neighborhood Development, the Mayor's Office of Capital Budgeting, and the Parks and Recreation Department.

## **CITY SQUARES**

East Boston's Central Square received a facelift that has revived its Victorian flair. Framed by its restored iron fence, new and rejuvenated trees, and rehabilitated benches, the two circular beds of bulbs, evergreens, and perennial flowers bring year-round color to this park at the heart of the neighborhood's shopping district. Charlestown's Sullivan Square, one of the principal gateways to the city and soon to be totally rebuilt, received an interim landscape treatment of ornamental grasses and native shrubs.

In the South End, the Parks Department worked with residents to address issues of their historic squares. For Chester Square, a design charrette was held to create schematic plans showing what could be developed if Massachusetts Avenue was rerouted through a tunnel under the park. Concord Square received a Browne Fund grant to restore its historic fence and fountain in conjunction with infrastructure and landscape improvements to be made by the Department. Neighborhood residents and the Parks Department's landscape contractor worked together to replant Rutland Square, paint the fence, and rejuvenate the trees.

Working with community residents, the Department oversaw a major redesign of Harriet Tubman Square, another South End square. Gone is the old sunken plaza that invited disreputable uses; replacing it is an at-grade design that prominently features both a new cast iron fence in keeping with the historic neighborhood character, and two bronze sculptures by African-American Bostonians, Fern Cunningham and the late Meta Warrick Fuller. Cunningham's sculpture, "Step on Board," (1999) memorializes Tubman's work on the Underground Railroad. Fuller's "Emancipation Proclamation" (1913) depicts the plight of freed slaves 50 years after the Civil War.

Other South End squares also received attention toward restoration. A dialog was begun with residents of Braddock Park to determine the direction of future landscape improvements, while the ongoing partnership with the Franklin and Blackstone Squares Association was strengthened by joint efforts to secure funding for landscape improvements.



## Boston's models of transit-oriented development

All over Boston, a number of transit nodes provide models for transit-centered development. These centers of activity vary greatly, underscoring the need to tailor land-use and urban design standards to fit the needs of each center. Among Boston's notable transit centers:

**The New England Aquarium.** Once isolated from its immediate vicinity, the Aquarium has made a number of improvements to its open plaza to improve connections to the Blue Line station. With the removal of the elevated Central Artery, the spaces between the Aquarium and the Financial District can be developed to create better connections.

**Downtown Crossing.** With its severe restrictions on automobiles, Downtown Crossing has become one of Boston's most diverse places to walk and explore. Located just one block from Boston Common, Downtown Crossing has one of the greatest concentrations of shopping activity in the city. Advocates for the district, which includes a number of offices and a growing number of restaurants, say that increasing housing density is critical to making the community a 24-hour neighborhood. The improvements to Washington Street, including the Millennium Place development, take full advantage of superior transit connections at Downtown Crossing and several nearby stops.

**Park Street.** The Park Street T is the premier transit mode for all of Boston, but the surrounding areas has become attractive and vibrant in recent years.

**Copley Square.** For more than a century, Copley Square has been a true civic center for Boston's Back Bay. Historic churches, the Boston Public Library, a diverse shopping district, a major convention center, well landscaped parks, lively restaurants and pubs, and the nearby Prudential Center provide numerous activities within walking distance. The streetscape has evolved to become interesting place for urban explorers. Perhaps the greatest improvement has been Copley Square itself, once a lifeless sunken plaza but now one of the greatest gathering spots during temperate months. Plans to close Dartmouth Street to traffic could further enhance the pedestrian character of the area and foster connections between Trinity Church and the library.

**Kenmore Square.** Located at the heart of Boston University, Kenmore Square has cleaned up its storefronts to provide a more attractive streetscape for residents and visitors alike. The redesign of the T station and bus turn-around should make the area safer and more attractive. Traffic along Commonwealth Avenue, which also feeds into Beacon Street, creates a difficult challenge.

**Stops along the Green Line's B and C trunks.** Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street provide numerous nodes of commercial activity near trolley stops. These clusters of businesses along the trolley lines include restaurants, furniture stores, convenience stores, services such as dry cleaners and real estate brokers, and movie houses. Although these stops often do not constitute full-fledged transit communities, they get their special character from the T lines.





## Utility cars

At its best, the automobile offers greater convenience and flexibility than any other amenity of modern life. At its worst, the automobile creates clogged streets, undermines the continuity of urban landscapes, chokes the air with pollution – and reduces people's willingness to use mass transit.

Critics of the automobile point to an urban landscape that has been compromised by the needs of the car – highways that overwhelm neighborhoods, garages and surface lots, malls, and drive-through eateries. Pedestrians are less and less safe as the volumes and speeds of traffic increase. Many poor and working-class people cannot afford to buy and maintain a car – and therefore lose out on opportunities for jobs, education, and cultural activities.

Perhaps most important, a real sense of urban community requires people to get out of their car and walk to places in their neighborhood. When people are dependent on the car to meet basic needs – access to jobs, shopping, and friends and family – they do not get to know their own neighborhood well. The neighborhood becomes a community of strangers.

The best way to make people less reliant on the automobile is to provide alternatives.

The traditional alternative is mass transit. If people can get around the city and region on a trolley, train, or bus – conveniently – they will not rely so much on cars. People will avoid cars especially during rush hours, reducing the overall level of congestion.

For mass transit to be an attractive alternative, it needs to be fast, reliable, and comfortable. Trains and buses have to come when you need them. Reaching a destination must entail no more than one transfer. The station and surrounding area must protect patrons from the weather and provide amenities like benches, newspapers, and convenience shopping.

Other alternatives to car ownership and dependence include bicycles, van shuttles, and walking.

But another alternative might be just as important as public transit. That alternative is known as the “station car” or “utility car.”

The station car operates on the principle that everyone occasionally needs the convenience of the car but few people want to be dependent on the car for every trip. The car should be a matter of convenience, not necessity. People should be able to get a car when they need one, but be free of the hassle when they do not need one.

Under the station-car concept, every neighborhood would offer a garage filled with many different kinds of cars that people could take out when they needed. A trip to a lumber yard might require a pickup truck. A weekend outing to the beach or a trip to the grocery store might require a station wagon. A day at the beach might mean a sports car.

Members of the station-car co-op would use an access card similar to a credit card to get the car of their choice. Just show up, get a car, and return it. Charges would be automatically assessed according to the kind of car, the time of use, the mileage, the driver's safety record, and other relevant factors. Everyone in the community would have access to a car at all times without needing to bear the expenses of ownership – and without burdening the community with excessive traffic. Best of all, the car would be understood as a matter of convenience, not necessity.

The station car eventually could be connected to a number of transportation innovations such as an electronic highway guidance system.

Moshe Safdie, the former director of graduate urban design at Harvard University, outlines the advantage of what he called the utility car:

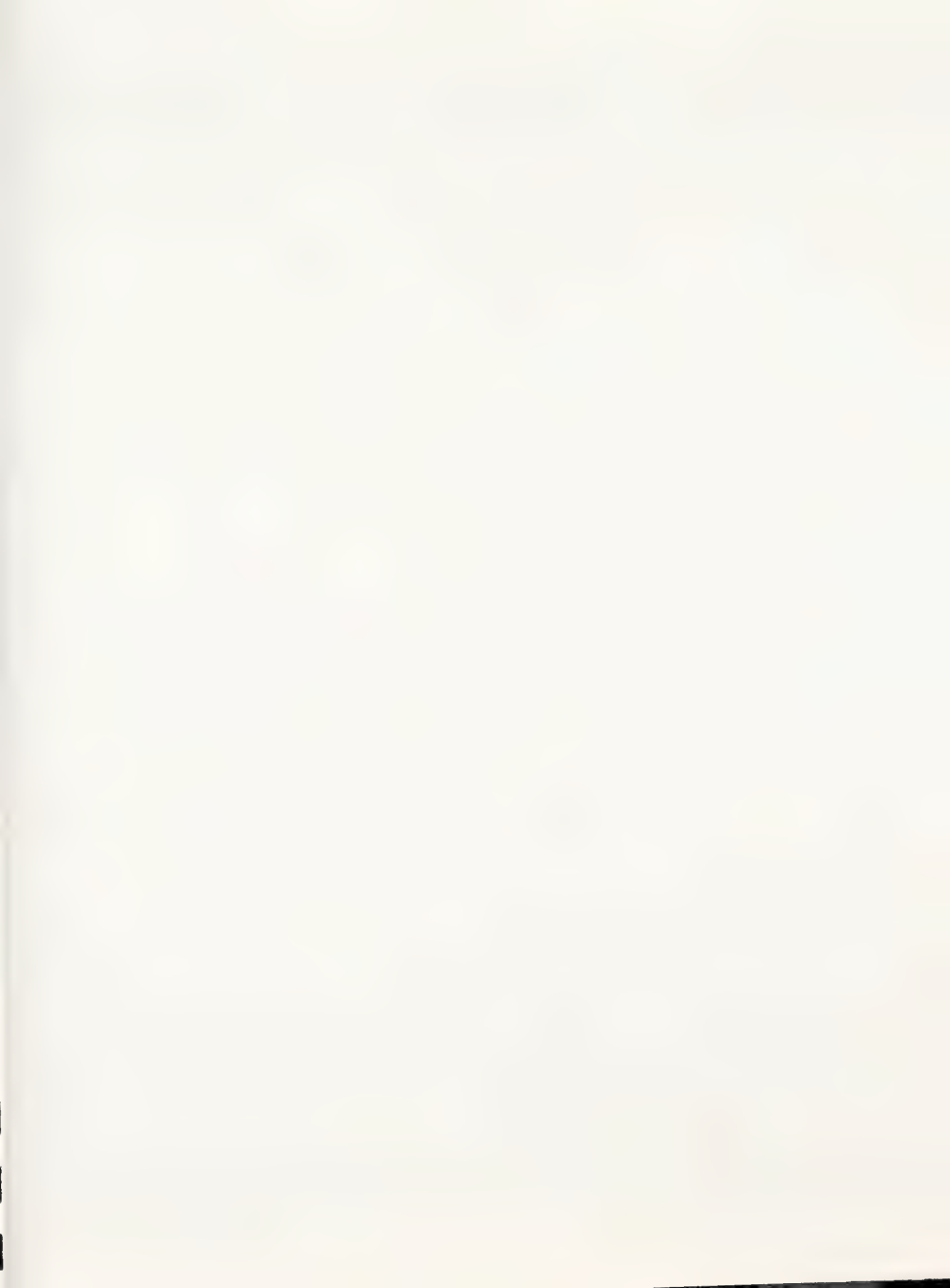


"From a purely economic point of view, the cost to an individual per mile would be less than operating his or her own vehicle. But the most appealing, most seductive, most compelling aspect of the U-car is pure and simple, the fulfillment of a longtime promise of cars: the carefree life. To have it at our disposal at any time; to have the freedom of mind not to worry about it and the physical freedom to get rid of it; and not to incur the cost of it when we do not need it – this indeed would be liberation."(p. 144, *The City After the Automobile*).

If designed well – like the new Central Artery garage on Congress Street between North and Sudbury Streets – the station-car garage could contribute to the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood.

Without having to spend so much on car travel, people would be less inclined to use the car for all their travel needs. They would be more open to other modes of transportation. The car would be one of many modes of transportation, not always the first choice.







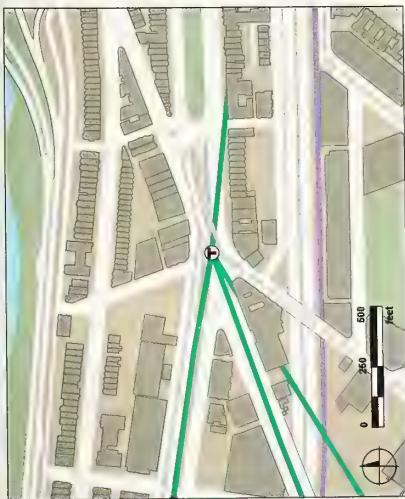










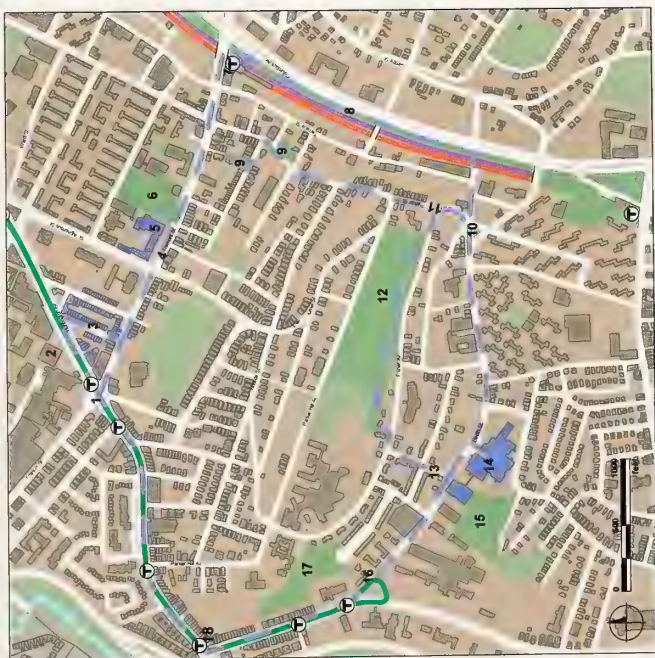


Kenmore



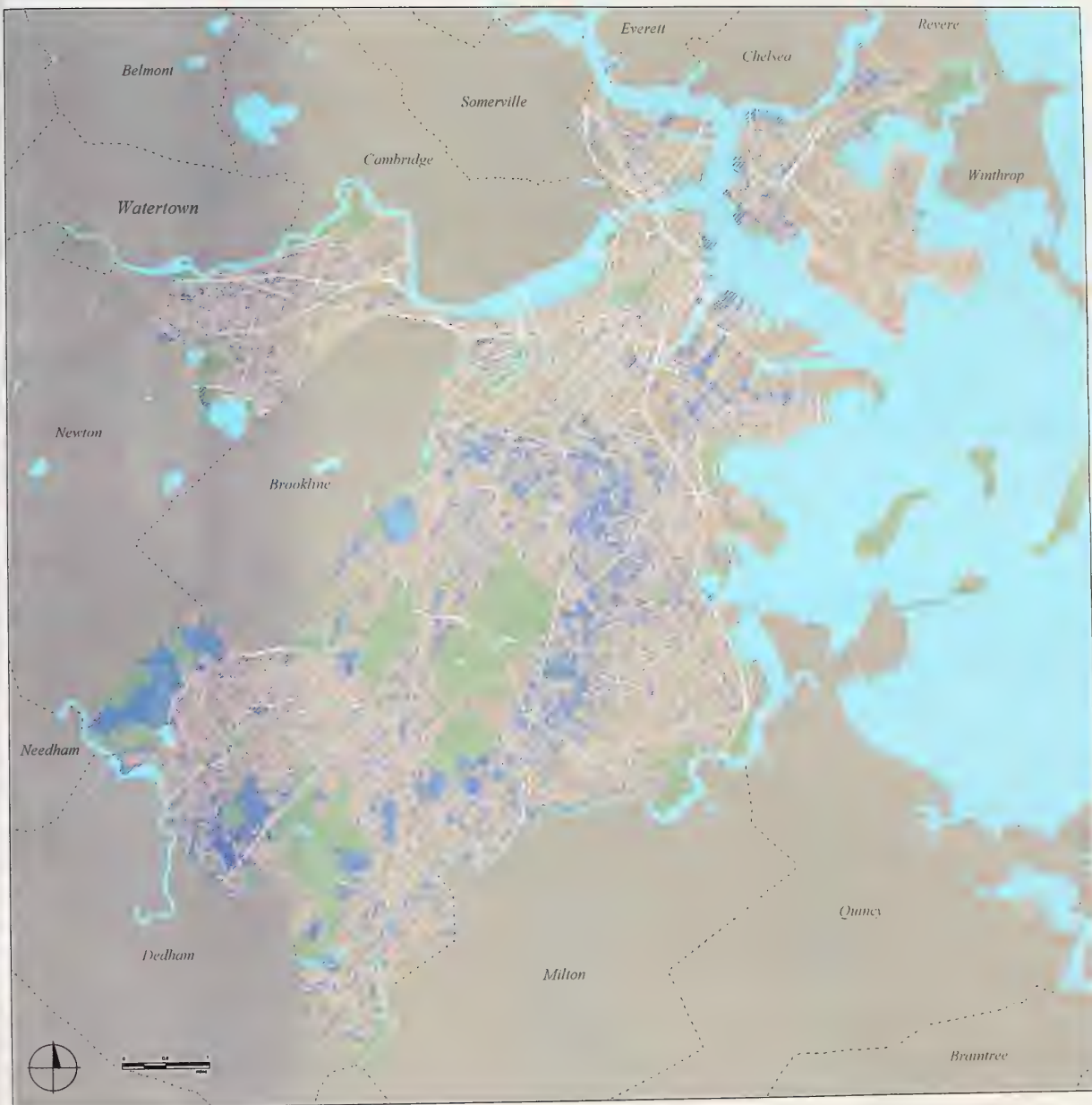
Forest Hills









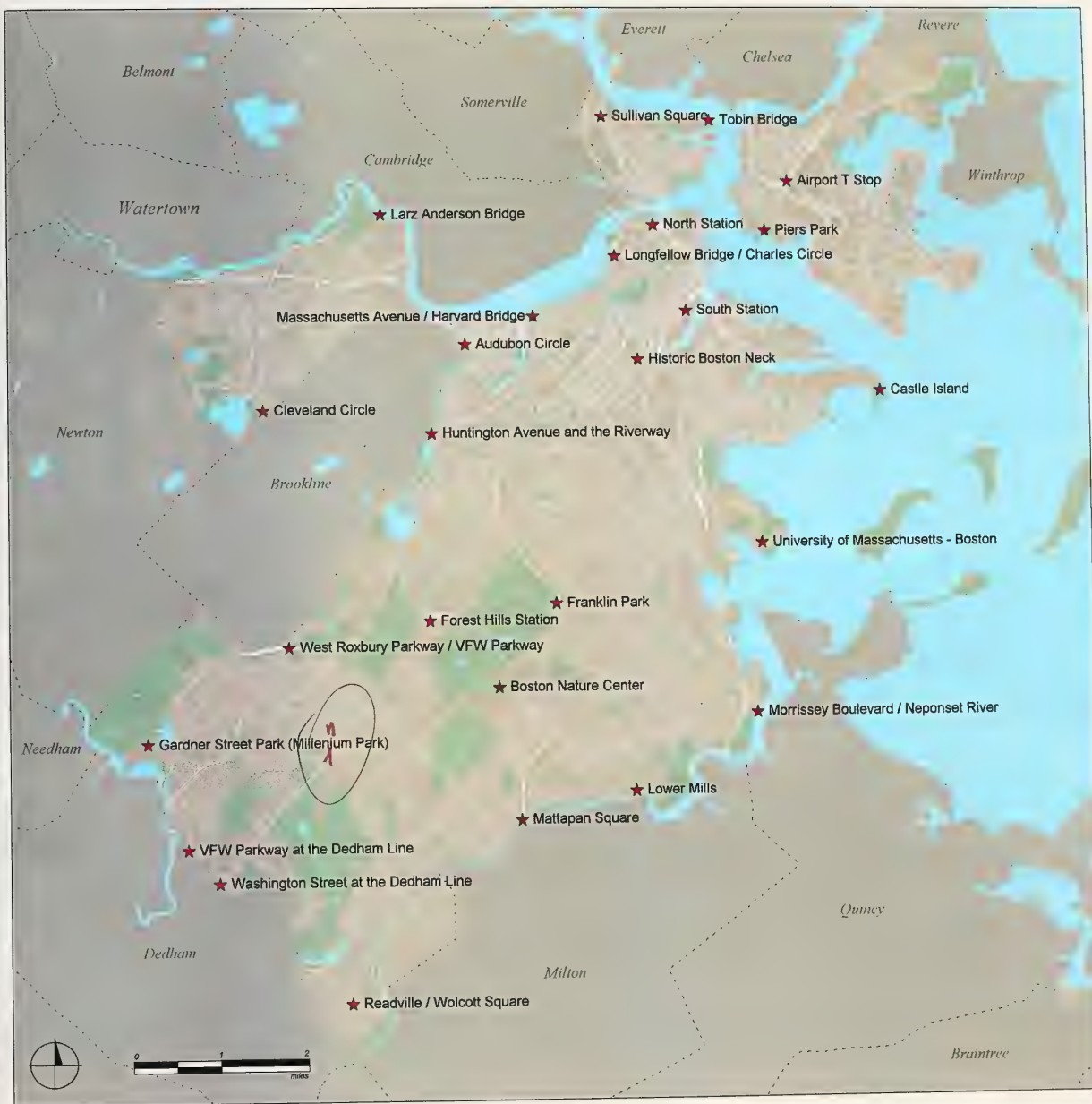














---

## **Boston is a vital natural environment**

Communities connected by water

Parks for Boston's commonwealth

Investing in our parks and natural resources

Playing fields for the next generation

Building nature into the city's fabric



### 3.

## **Boston is a vital natural environment**

To say that the city is a natural environment might seem like a statement of defiance against the facts of highways and airports, skyscrapers and subdivisions, industrial complexes and vast systems of infrastructure. But the life of the city depends on the way it responds to the demands and limitations of nature. In a seminal study, Ann Whiston Spirn notes: "Nature is a continuum, with wilderness at one pole and the city at the other. The same natural processes operate in the wilderness and in the city." Wherever you go in Boston, nature is abundant. To take advantage of that abundance, economic and community development at all levels need to complement the city's complex natural spaces. Cities like Boston thrive when they achieve ecological as well as social and economic diversity in their communities.

The greatest challenge is to repair the ruptures in the parks, harbors, islands, rivers, gardens, urban wilds, hillsides that comprise the city's natural system. The Boston Harbor and Boston Harbor Islands National Park represent one of the most exciting challenges of the next generation. The success of the ongoing effort to clean up the Harbor creates an opportunity to reopen the whole waterfront for active and passive recreation. The Harborwalk – a 43-mile pedestrian path that runs from Charlestown and East Boston down to Dorchester's Neponset River – requires improvements along parcels that make up about half of the system. The Emerald Necklace is a world-renowned citywide park system, but it is damaged by highways and overpasses, polluted river beds, and uneven development and landscaping. The Parks Department's efforts to restore the Emerald Necklace have achieved impressive results, but more work remains to be done. Improvement of major parkways, which once offered green corridors connecting other natural spaces but have become overrun by automobile traffic, could provide a critical strategy for such citywide parks connections.

In addition to repairing the damaged pieces of citywide park systems, Boston faces the challenge of improving access to parks of all sizes in all neighborhoods. Many communities in Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Allston-Brighton, and East Boston lack access to lively neighborhood parks that offer spaces for families and neighbors to gather. All over Boston, parks, playgrounds, schoolyards, urban wilds, and gardens form smaller systems of natural spaces that give definition and vitality to the neighborhoods. But many of these natural spaces are overrun or need design improvements to meet the changing needs of their communities. They also need to connect better with other civic spaces to create networks that define and animate the neighborhood. Strengthening these networks into systems of "charm bracelets" is critical for the goal of balancing urban and natural resources.

Boston's five rivers – which border all but two of the neighborhoods – remain polluted from an earlier industrial age and isolated from their communities. The Metropolitan District Commission's master plans for the Charles and Neponset Rivers offer new opportunities for connection Bostonians to their waterfronts. Boston must seize the opportunity to build on these efforts with comprehensive planning efforts that connect the rivers with a wide range of other community assets and to improve the overall experience of the areas.





Over the past generation, Boston's public agencies, nonprofit corporations, businesses, and community organizations have developed a sophisticated understanding of the ubiquity of natural spaces in the city. We now understand that improving the natural environment cannot be separated from a larger agenda of urban development – and vice versa. In the next generation, we have an opportunity to develop ever more extensive systems of parks and other natural spaces. Such spaces would enhance the overall character of Boston and its neighborhoods.

## **Principles of planning for a vital natural environment**

Boston's residents have expressed environmental values with the following five basic principles of planning:

*Incorporate the natural environment into all planning and development.* Nature shapes the basic contours of the community. In Boston, a harbor and five rivers have created the outlines for all of the city's diverse communities. Sometimes, nature has to accommodate the demands of the manmade community. But every attempt should be made to make sure that natural systems are incorporated into development to prevent contamination of land and air and water, flooding, and landslides. Rather than emphasizing the costs associated with environmentally destructive development, it makes sense to emphasize the benefits of a strong environment. Good environmental conditions make for healthy people, sustainable citywide systems, and a superior quality of life – all of which make the city a desirable place to live and work.

*All communities and people deserve well-designed parks and recreation spaces.* Nature is essential to the everyday life of all people. People need places to find refuge from city life, places to stroll and socialize, places that commemorate history, places for children, places where youngsters and oldsters can play organized sports, places to garden and swim and canoe.

*Sustainable development requires difficult choices.* The pace and demands of economic development often do not highlight the importance of protecting and developing our natural resources. Housing developers, transportation planners, office-builders, community retailers, school administrators, and others face so many conflicting demands that they do not always put a high priority on environmental issues. Local government must do everything it can to insure that environmental issues become part of the calculus of all urban development projects.

*Natural assets should be linked into seamless systems, which are developed over time.* Real access to natural spaces requires that these spaces be linked with each other and as many other community resources as possible. A park is a destination, but it should be much more, too. Community streets and sidewalks should be designed to gently lead people from one community resource to another – parks, schools, transit stations, business districts, libraries, community centers, museums and historic sites. These systems are best designed and enhanced over time, as part of a clear but evolving plan. The best networks are mixes of old and new elements, which capture the character of the community's long legacy.

*Parks and natural spaces require good design and stewardship.* To be used and enjoyed, green spaces have to be well-designed and connected with a wide range of other community resources. They have to be accessible. And they need regular maintenance – from daily trash pickups, repairs of broken fences and paths, and occasional repair and reconstruction of their major elements. Occasionally, as popular activities and tastes change, the overall design of a park might have to change as well.



## INITIATIVE: COMMUNITIES CONNECTED BY WATER

~~Water is truly the world's irreplaceable resource. Without a reliable supply of water, neither the residents nor the businesses of any city could long survive.~~ From ancient times to the present, harbors and rivers have defined cities' spaces for economic activity, transportation, recreation, culture, and habitation. Water defines what is most basic about our own communities, and at the same time challenges us to explore the world beyond our own horizons. Boston is defined by the Boston Harbor and five rivers – the Charles, Muddy, Neponset, Mystic, and Chelsea – which connect with virtually every neighborhood in the City. Each of these waterways helps to define distinct communities – the neighborhoods within a half mile of the Neponset River watershed, for example, are home to 130,000 people, which would make it the fourth largest city in the Commonwealth – and enhancements of natural spaces strengthen civic identity and economic viability. In the past generations, massive cleanup efforts have transformed the Boston Harbor, the Charles River, and the Neponset River. The job of the next generation is to enhance and connect these "blue" spaces so that they are more ecologically and socially vibrant.

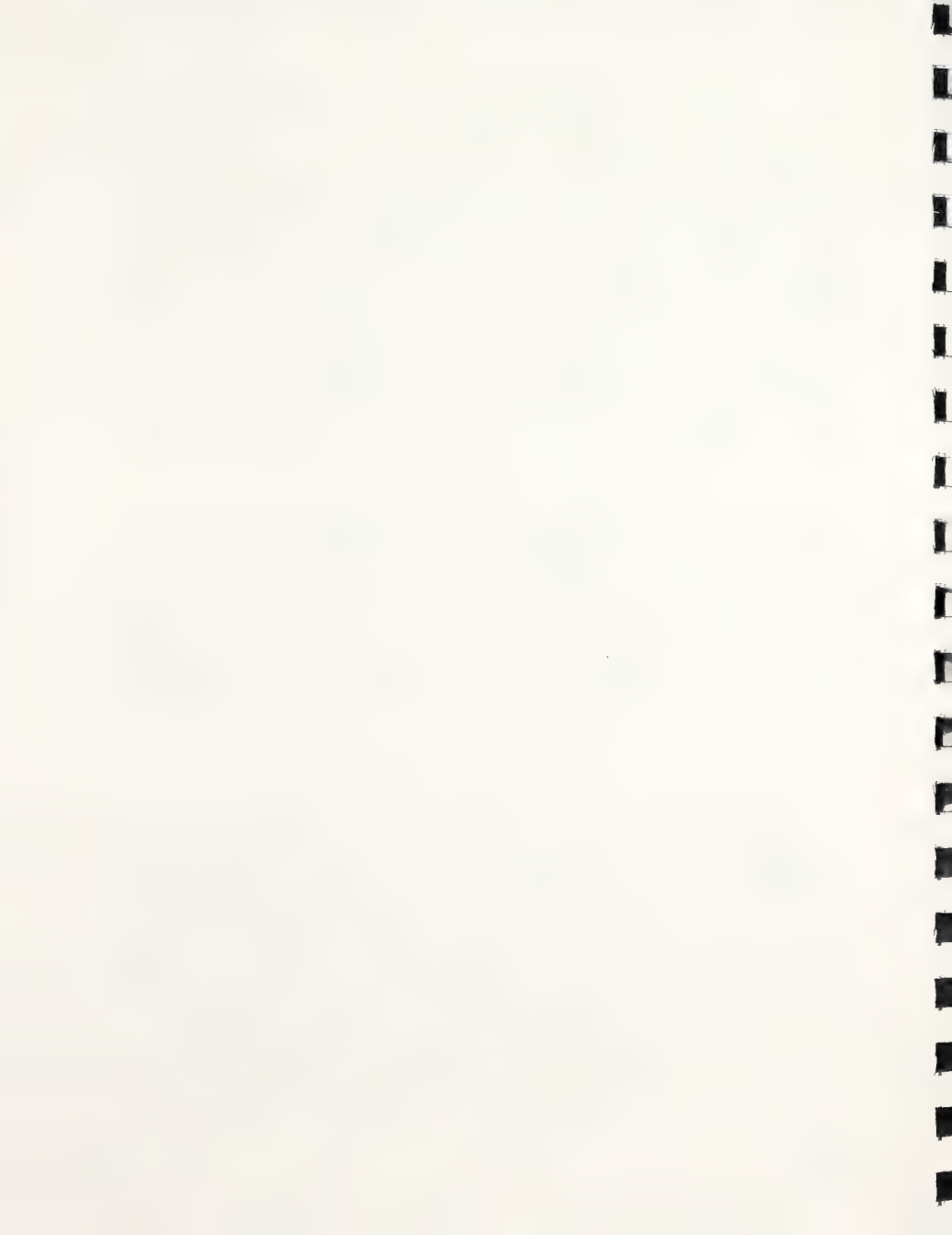
### Vision

By the City's 400th birthday, the City should create environmental and land-use improvements in and around the Boston Harbor and the city's five rivers so that each waterway improves its immediate area. To connect people to the Boston Harbor and the Boston Harbor Islands National Park, the City should enhance transit connections to the waterfront and improve the appearance and pedestrian and bicycle accessibility of major streets like Columbia Road. The City should also complete Harborwalk to provide a seamless system of pathways along the entire 47-mile stretch from East Boston to the Neponset River. The City should create overlay districts for the City's five rivers and engage nearby communities in planning processes that coordinate the activities of all major City and state agencies – and provide clear standards for waterfront development. Above all, the City and state should make watersheds a fundamental element in all city planning.

### Assets and opportunities

There is a growing appreciation for the importance of water resources in the life of the city. For most of Boston's history, Boston Harbor and its five rivers were considered to be little more than sources of energy and depositories of wastes. Even after the end of the industrial era, the harbor and rivers have been the ultimate depository of sewage and runoff. But in recent years, Bostonians have made conscious efforts to put their best face toward the waterways. The greatest of Boston's waterways is, of course, Boston Harbor. A major cleanup of the harbor has made it fishable and swimmable on most days for the first time in years. The Harbor boasts eight miles of beaches, over 20 miles of public access to the water's edge, several community boating facilities, 30 islands that are now the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, and countless commercial enterprises including ship-building and fish-processing facilities.

Boston is also a city of **five rivers** that touch nearly every neighborhood and shape the natural and manmade environment. The Charles, Neponset, Chelsea, Muddy and Mystic Rivers all define the edges of the city and its neighborhoods, acting as natural boundaries between



Boston and its immediate neighbors. While people have enjoyed recreation in and along the banks of the Charles and the Muddy Rivers for many years, the Neponset, Chelsea, and Mystic Rivers are just now getting the opportunity to realize their community development potential.

[see *SIDE Neponset River+ and MAP of Neponset River*] [see *SIDE Muddy River+ and MAP of Muddy River*] [see *SIDE Charles River+ and MAP of Charles River*] [see *SIDE Mystic River and Chelsea Creek+ and MAP of Mystic River and Chelsea Creek*]

In recent years, Boston's waterways have benefited from **major cleanup efforts** that promise to make them all swimmable and fishable in the next generation. Billions of dollars have been invested in improving the quality of the water in the harbor and five rivers, as well as modernizing the sewer and treatment systems in the region. [see *SIDE harbor cleanup (to come)*]

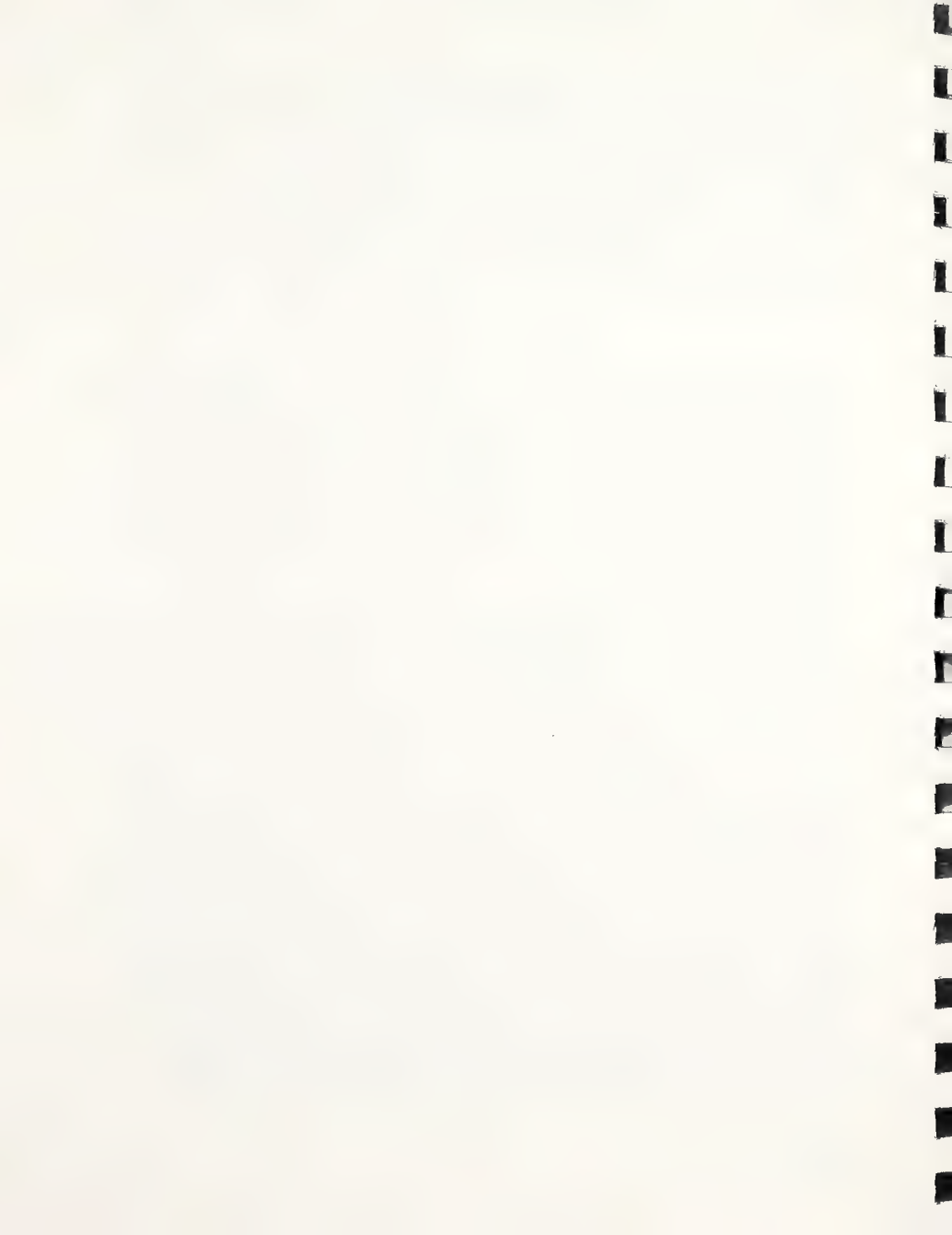
## Barriers and Challenges

Water **runoff and flooding** occasionally overwhelms communities in Fenway, Mission Hill, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, the South End and other communities. Before the filling of the Back Bay and Fenway and the construction of the Emerald Necklace, the areas southwest of the Boston Common acted as flood plains that absorbed runoff during heavy storms. But with the reconstruction of the banks of the Charles and Muddy Rivers, the covering of the Stony Brook, and the landfills, runoff and drainage after heavy storms sometimes overwhelms the narrower channels. Flooding has been most severe at the Muddy River, where three floods in the past decade have caused tens of millions of dollars in damage to transit systems, buildings, and public spaces. [see *MAP of Stony Brook culvert*]

Many **communities are disconnected from nearby waterways**, because of poor landscaping and design, lack of physical access, and inadequate transportation to the water's edge. Perhaps even greater than the logistical barriers are psychological barriers. Many residents have not been introduced to the beaches and other waterfront resources as if they were their own; building a sense of civic ownership is important not only for the sake of fairness, but also for the sake of stewardship and community-building. Near all of Boston's waterways, fragmented and uncoordinated land use undermines the continuity of natural and civic spaces. Industrial uses, large-scale commercial and entertainment activities, and highways and major roads create an unreliable and often unattractive path to the water's edge. Before waterfronts were considered a precious urban amenity, they were considered places to locate noxious businesses that could use the water for energy or release large volumes of water and other wastes conveniently. That history often prevents residents from knowing the city's waterways as the resources that they are.

Access to land right along the banks of the harbor and rivers is also limited by **complicated ownership patterns**. The Harborwalk – a decades-old effort of public and nonprofit entities to create a continuous walkway along the 49-mile stretch of the waterfront – is inaccessible at about half of the spaces along the water. Chapter 91 of the Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act of 1886, as amended in 1990, requires private developers to provide public access to the water's edge, but is only applicable when construction is being done. Existing inaccessible places are “grandfather” and do not need to provide access until significant renovations are undertaken.

**Boston lies downstream** of most communities in the metropolitan area, burdening the city with the pollution discharged by other communities– as well as the consequences of the reluctance of other communities to make changes in their water and sewage practices and to contribute to cleanup and enhancement efforts. [see *SIDE Boston lies downstream*]



## Actions

### The challenges for the federal government include . . .

- **Develop a comprehensive plan for access to the Boston Harbor Islands National Park.** The Boston Harbor Islands Partnership in 1999 released a master plan for the development of the islands into a national park. Those plans call for a mix of activities and development projects that include educational, scientific, cultural and historic, outdoors recreation, restaurants and commercial activities, and special events. All of these projects require major efforts to improve transportation access – improvements both in the land access from inland Boston and in the boat access from the water's edge to the islands. *[see SIDE harbor isles] [see MAP of harbor islands]*

### The challenges for the state include . . .

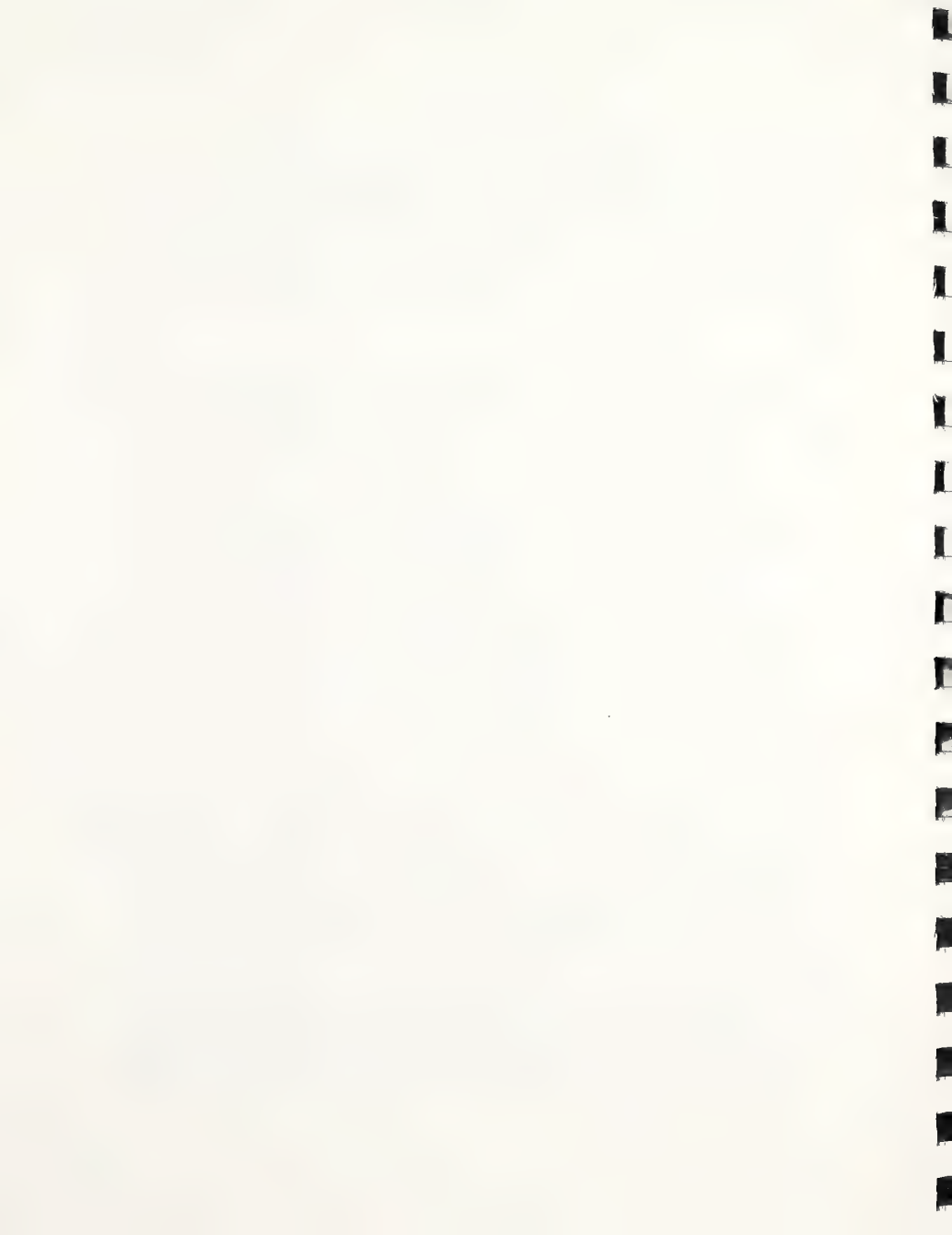
- **Continue efforts to improve access to Boston Harbor.** Boston Harbor is a resource not only for the people in the communities along the harbor's edge but for the entire Greater Boston Region. The Department of Environmental Protection, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, and Metropolitan District Commission play a major role in providing, maintaining, and improving access to the many resources at the harbor's edge. *[see SIDE Our Central Park]*

- **Continue to work with the City regarding Municipal Harbor Plans.** All new construction and buildings that are being substantially renovated are required to obtain a "Chapter 91 License" from the Department of Environmental Protection. The state should work with the City on individual cases through the Municipal Harbor Plan process.

- **Improve public transit service to the water's edge.** A critical part of improved waterfront access has to be mass transit and bicycle network improvements. Possible creation of a new Aqua Line trolley that runs from Forest Hills Station to the University of Massachusetts would provide a strong connection across the city. Improvements in the Red Line – in the design of the transit nodes and in the development of comfortable paths and shuttles from stations to waterfront connections – would also enhance access. The development of special shuttles to the waterfront could also make the harbor open to all Bostonians.

- **Improve water transportation within the city and throughout the region.** Boston has a history of water-based travel that had been lost in recent decades. Over the last several years, however, people have rediscovered the convenience – and enjoyment – of traveling in and around Boston by boat. Still, the routes are not seamless and there are not routes to serve all of Boston's waterfront neighborhoods. Using the information compiled in the BRA's recently-completed Boston Inner Harbor Passenger Water Transportation Plan, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and Massport should establish new routes within the city and throughout the region to create a seamless network of water transportation.

- **Continue efforts to provide connected recreational spaces along the water's edge.** Recent years have seen the Metropolitan District Commission's Back to the Beaches campaign, the construction of the Neponset River Greenway, and other efforts to provide recreational spaces along Boston Harbor and the city's five rivers. Build on and coordinate with the City's Harborwalk initiative to create a seamless network of paths and recreational spaces along all of Boston's waterfront.





- **Build on the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative.** The Department of Environmental Protection has embarked on an ambitious effort to coordinate water resource protection and management at the watershed level. Continue to work with regional watershed associations to raise consciousness about watersheds and gather water quality and quantity data. Regulate development and waterworks projects with a focus on the longterm sustainability of the city's and the region's precious water resources.

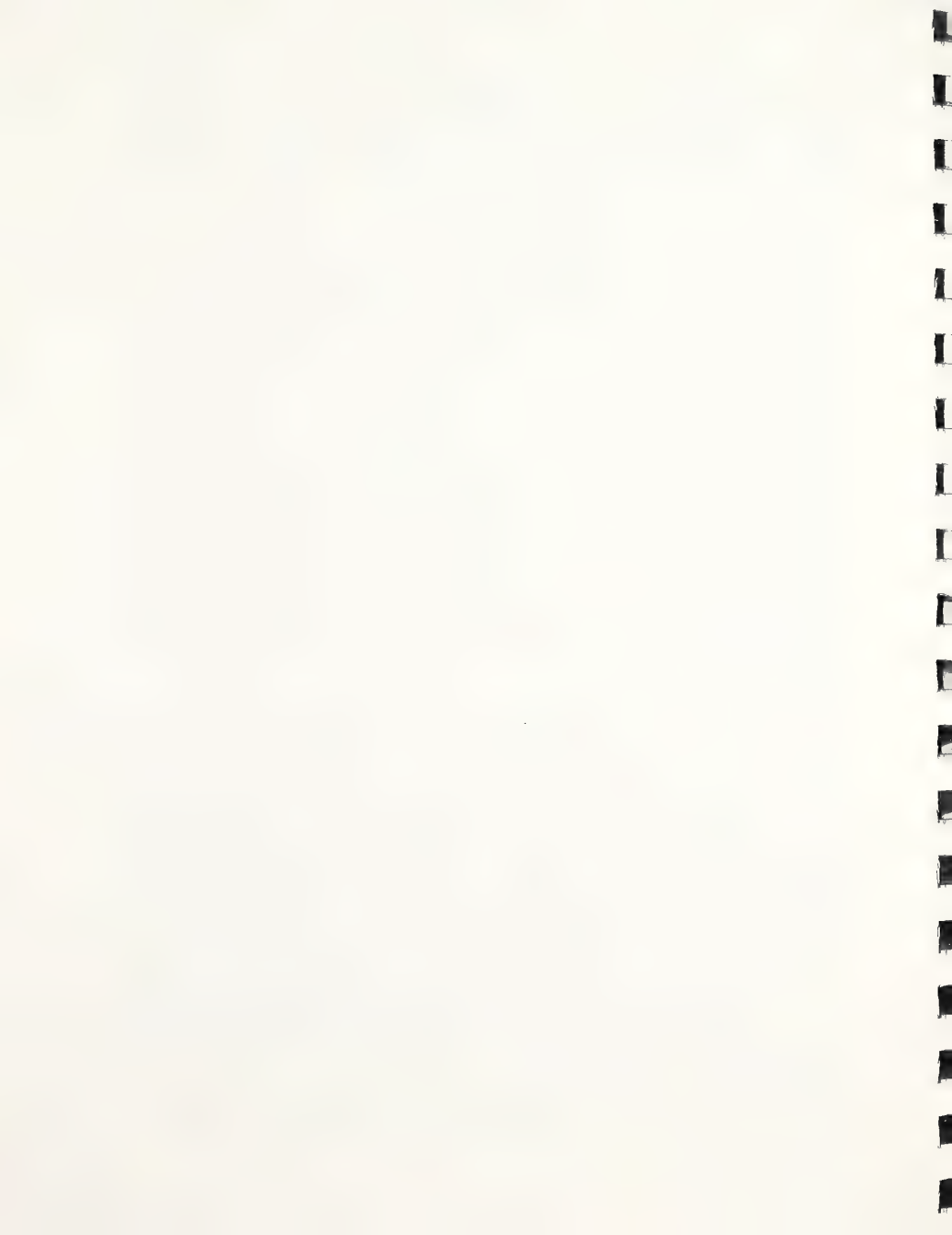
### **The challenges for the city include . . .**

- **Develop standards for waterfront design.** The City has already overseen major improvements in the appearance and functional design of the waterfront. The next job, as the City completes the 49-mile Harborwalk, is to summarize the best practices for waterfront projects to guide developers and government agencies in the next generation. Develop a "tool kit" for public and private developers of the waterfront. Include incentives and design standards for landscaping, signage, connections of paths, view corridors and vantage points, building frontage and public access.

- **Complete the construction of the Harborwalk.** The Harborwalk offers the greatest attraction of all for urbanites and visitors alike – a view of the water. The attractions of the waterfront are almost endless – walking, bicycling, sailing, fishing, picnicking, visiting historic and cultural attractions. The guiding principle behind waterfront planning is simple: providing seamless and attractive paths will produce the pedestrian traffic needed for lively public places. Rather than create a comprehensive "themed" playland, the City and other government and community organizations should continue to concentrate on making the waterfront as accessible as possible. The first priority should be to create new transit and bicycle connections from inland Boston and making the waterfront paths open and continuous. The City should always apply strict standards for proposed development along the waterfront, guaranteeing that even private spaces provide significant public spaces and amenities along the waterfront. [see *SIDE Harborwalk+*] [see *MAP of Harborwalk*]

- **Create river overlay districts.** To protect and enhance areas of the city with extraordinary qualities, it sometimes makes sense to use special legal structures and standards. In an overlay district, a set of zoning regulations is added to existing regulations in a well-defined territory. These special regulations help to promote specific goals and objectives that might otherwise get lost in the tangle of competing local interests. Cities and towns have successfully established overlay districts for rivers, mountain areas, transit nodes, areas vulnerable to storms, historic neighborhoods, and business and cultural areas. A river overlay district would require consideration of the many pieces of a river area – streetscape and urban design, transportation, housing, manufacturing, shipping, warehousing, environmental cleanup, development of parks and other civic facilities – in relation to each other. Initiatives to improve one portion of the area – such as river cleanup and development of parks and boat launches – would be supported by nearby efforts to enhance pedestrian connections, signage, or street definition. Or to take another example, decisions over how to redevelop obsolete warehouses of manufacturing sites would be coordinated with development of traffic circulation plans or systems of public access to the waterfront. Perhaps most important, the district could help coordinate the activities of the City of Boston, state agencies and authorities, and nearby municipalities. [see *SIDE river overlay district*]

The district might create new funding sources to finance common infrastructure and other development, such as roads, sidewalks, parks, landscaping, and cleanup, as well as specific



projects. The main purpose of the district would be to coordinate the planning and development activities of many different public and private entities by creating a planning process and a set of regulations to carry the planning forward into physical development.

- **Make physical connections between Boston's rivers and nearby neighborhoods.**

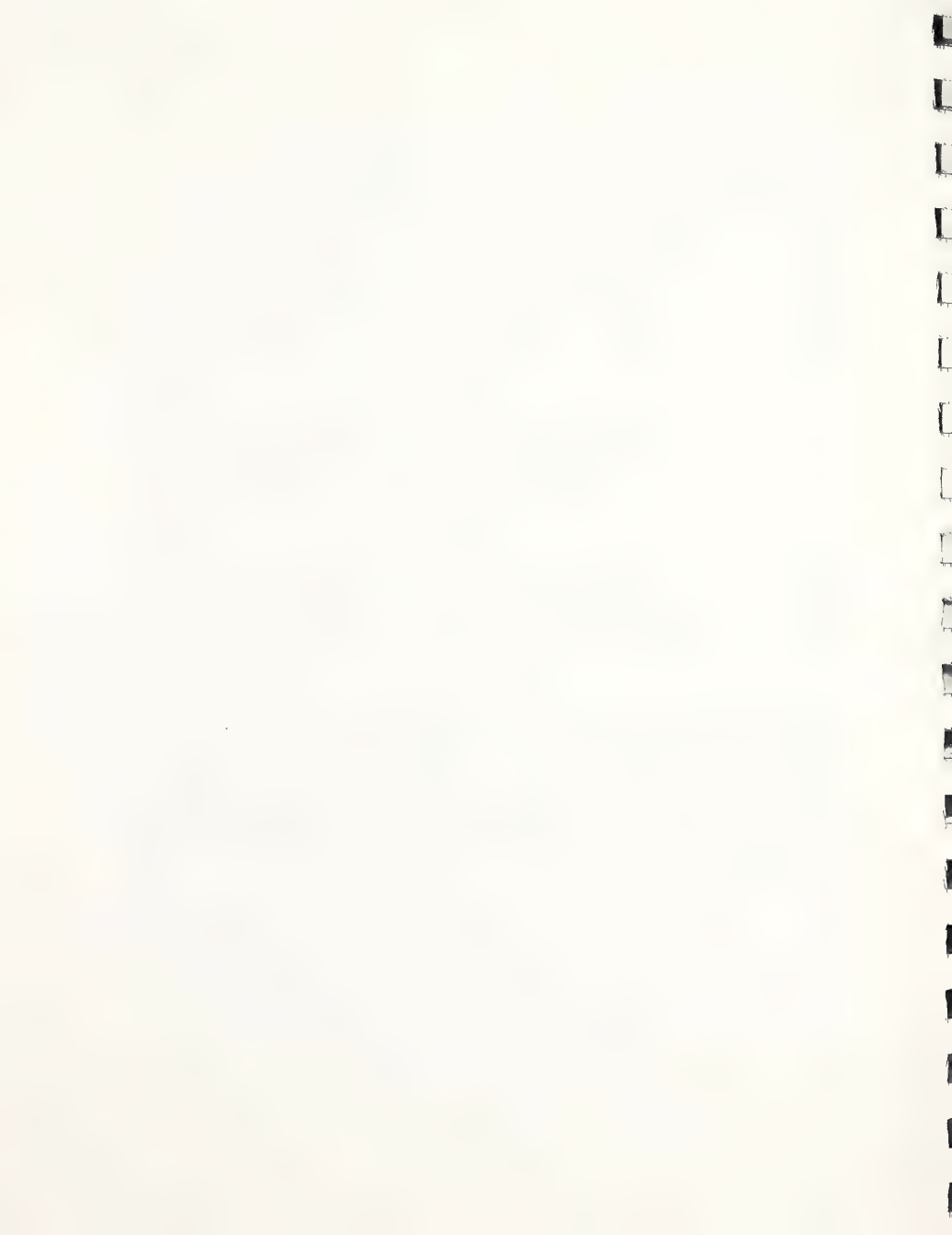
Boston's five rivers need to be opened to their communities to foster activities near the water. Simple design improvements that highlight the path to the water from nearby neighborhoods could dramatically link the river to the rest of the community. Strategic connections with bicycle paths would open the riverfronts to recreational riders around the region as well as neighborhoods. The development of parks and playgrounds, gardens, public art, places to sit, bridges and overlooks, attractive signage, gateways, and more transparent fencing near the rivers would also bring the neighborhoods closer to the rivers. The elimination of noxious overgrowth – such as the phragmites reeds along the Muddy River – is also essential to clean the rivers and make them visible to passersby.

- **Build seamless bicycle paths from inland parks to the water's edge.** Boston boasts a number of bikeways across the city, including the Southwest Corridor Park's Pierre Lallemont bicycle path, paths along the Emerald Necklace, and portions of Harborwalk, but they are not a well connected system. Starting with the South Bay Harbortrail, build bike paths that connect the city's neighborhoods to its waterfront areas. Whenever possible, separate these paths from automobile traffic and incorporate traffic calming devices into roadway designs at crossings. [*see MAP of Southwest Corridor*]

- **Continue to develop municipal harbor plans** for the city's waterfront areas in order to promote development that will increase public access to the harbor from all of the city's neighborhoods. These plans should include provisions for pedestrian access, public amenities, balanced development based on citywide and neighborhood priorities. Because of the specific historic, economic, and geographic character of different waterfront communities, these plans must be developed with site-specific strategies that also respond to broader urban design principles.

### **The challenges for the non profit community include . . .**

- **Continue advocacy efforts.** The Boston area's several watershed associations have been instrumental in raising the consciousness of citizens and policymakers on the importance of watershed protection and management. In addition, they have been critical in gathering and analyzing data, organizing volunteers, and advocating for enforcement of environmental regulations. These groups should continue their work in partnership with State and City agencies and each other.



## INITIATIVE: PARKS FOR BOSTON'S COMMONWEALTH

Despite their essential character as “man-made” environments, cities are only as good as the natural systems that weave throughout the neighborhoods, business districts, and transportation networks. Large systems of parks bring ~~awesome~~ resources near the homes of all people. Citywide park systems not only provide a “respite” from the rigors of everyday urban life, but also play a fundamental role in shaping the urban landscape and the character of the neighborhoods. Parks and natural spaces should be woven into the very fabric of all of the city’s neighborhoods – their parks, playgrounds, gardens, and wilds – to temper and shape the built environment everywhere.

Frederick Law Olmsted’s “Emerald Necklace” system of parks expresses the idea that citywide park systems are essential for both the quality of life and the ecological strength of modern communities. The challenge of our next generation is to build on the Olmsted legacy by continuing our restoration of the Emerald Necklace and extending the city’s green-space systems to reach even more of Boston’s communities. The common ground of parks and natural spaces – open to all, with a wide range of activities and experiences – offers a way to define Boston in ways that respect neighborhood integrity but also foster a larger citywide identity.

### Vision

As Boston moves toward its fourth centenary, major citywide park systems should be extended in every direction. The primary goal should be to complete the restoration of the Emerald Necklace with improvements of critical nodes, edges, and design improvements of Olmsted’s system. The Emerald Necklace should be extended everywhere – beginning with the its extension along Columbia Road to Carson Beach as an “aqua” transit corridor that connects the green of Franklin Park with the blue of the Boston Harbor waterfront. The Charles-to-Charles connection would create a natural corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists from the new Gardner Street park up along the Brookline border and eventually reaching the Charles River near the Bowker Overpass. The cluster of green spaces in the heart of the city – Franklin Park, Arnold Arboretum, Boston Nature Center, Hirambe Park, Forest Hills and other cemeteries – should be connected into a ubiquitous system of diverse, connected natural spaces. Meanwhile, the city’s parkways should recover their mission as places for people to enjoy nature when traveling with efforts to calm traffic and provide better spaces for pedestrians and bicyclists. *[see MAP of citywide greenspaces]*

### Assets and opportunities

One of the great park-management successes of our time is the **restoration of the Emerald Necklace**. The Parks Department has undertaken a number of efforts to improve the connections between pieces of the Emerald Necklace, redesign critical pieces of the system, improve transit access, and recover “missing” pieces. *[see MAP of the realized Emerald Necklace]*

In recent years, the city has added **new green spaces** to its parks inventory. In 1999 alone, the Boston Nature Center opened a 66-acre nature preserve and facility at the site of the old Boston State Hospital, the City opened a new 90-acre Gardner Street park in West Roxbury, and the Boston Harbor Islands National Park Partnership announced its plans for new recreation and



educational spaces on its 30 islands. By 2003, with the Central Artery submerged underground, some 27 acres of new urban land will be available for a wide range of purposes including parks.

A number of efforts are under way to **improve public transportation access** to the city's park systems. The Parks Department has created a new pedestrian path from Forest Hills Station to the Arnold Arboretum, the MBTA has approved a new bus line from Forest Hills Station to the new Gardner Street park in West Roxbury, and planning efforts in East Boston and the South Boston Waterfront call for strong connections between transit stations and local parks and waterfront areas. The new Silver Line will provide connections from South Boston to Dudley Station. The East Boston master plan also calls for improvements at Maverick and Central Squares, which will improve connections to that community's waterfront and greenway.

A **diverse coalition of greenspace advocates** has brought new life to the city's parks, playgrounds, gardens, and wilds. The work of government agencies like the Boston Parks and Recreation Department and the Metropolitan District Commission, large-scale institutions like the Zoo New England, and nonprofit organizations like the Boston Natural Areas Fund and Boston GreenSpace Alliance have created a new vision of a city as a natural environment. The underlying ethos of these groups is the need to connect parks and natural spaces of everyday life. Rather than singling out parks as a separate aspect of urban life, these green space advocates have insisted that natural spaces be woven into the very fabric of the city.

**Public support** for parks and natural spaces has never been greater. Surveys conducted by the Trust for Public Land have found high levels of public support for increased investment in natural spaces – waterfront, major citywide and regional parks, neighborhood parks and playgrounds, gardens and wilds. The public shows a sophisticated understanding of how vital natural spaces are to the overall quality of life in Boston and the Commonwealth. [*see SIDE public opinion on parks funding*]

Federal, state, and local governments have joined with community groups to **support the acquisition and protection of natural spaces**. The Clinton Administration's "livability agenda," the MDC's substantial park acquisition fund, and the City's cooperation with the State on preserving urban wilds like Hellenic Hill in Jamaica Plain, signal an important advance in the understanding of the relatedness of environmental and urban issues. The Community Preservation Act, now under consideration in the state legislature, also enjoys high levels of support in Boston and other communities.

## Barriers and challenges

All of the citywide and regional park systems have **disconnected pieces** that undermine the access and character of the park system. State and local departments have already made efforts to restore connections along the Emerald Necklace, but numerous challenges remain at Charlesgate, Back Bay Fens, Forest Hills, Arborway, Columbia Road. [*see SIDE emerald necklace improvements*] In addition, other potential systems remain largely unconnected to the larger system including the Charles-to-Charles corridor, the Neponset and East Boston Greenways, and the parks in the Heart of the City – which includes Franklin Park, the Arnold Arboretum, the new Boston Nature Center, and nearby cemeteries. [*see MAP of East Boston Greenway*]

The major initiatives needed to improve the city's citywide systems **cost more money** than is now available for parks and natural spaces. The Parks Department's annual budget of \$9 million does not provide adequate funds for maintenance and programming – not to mention acquisitions. Even if it is used to leverage other funds from other public and private sources, the





City's annual parks acquisitions budget of \$250,000 pales in comparison with the outlays of other cities.

Many elements of Boston's citywide parks systems have **inadequate transit access**, undermining not only use of the system but also stewardship of those pieces and the development of the constituencies needed to promote their development.

A related challenge is that the design of large parks are subject to **pressures from users and operators** and threaten the longterm beauty and accessibility of these spaces. Major festivals, rallies, concerts, and athletic events often overwhelm the Charles River Esplanade, Boston Common, and Franklin Park. Caribbean, Puerto Rican, Kite festivals, and Fall Fest, to name a few, have become some of the most popular events in the city. Traffic, parking, provision of basic amenities like toilets, and cleanup are the greatest challenges to these spaces. If these public places are to avoid being "loved to death," the City needs to identify other places where these events and activities can take place.

Many of the pieces of Boston's citywide parks suffer from **inadequate landscaping and inadequate design**. The entrances and edges of Franklin Park, the Boston Nature Center, and to a lesser extent the Arnold Arboretum do not invite passersby or convey the grandeur of the spaces inside. These and other parks – like the new Pope John Paul II and Gardner Street parks – need to be more inviting in order to attract visitors and improve nearby neighborhoods. *[see SIDE articulation of large spaces]*

Because much of the city has grown up around the Emerald Necklace, much of the system is subject to **automobile pressures** that were not envisioned when the systems were created. Cars dominate major natural spaces like Franklin Park, the Arborway, the Muddy River's connection to the Charles River, the Riverway and Jamaica Way, and Columbia Road. Automobile access must be accommodated in these areas and on other streets near major parks, but enhancing pedestrian and bicycle spaces is critical to the public enjoyment of the parks and the enhancement of nearby neighborhoods.

A more practical difficulty is the **jurisdictional complexities** involved in the maintenance and operation of the Emerald Necklace, the Esplanade, the waterfront, and many other elements of the citywide system of green spaces. Boston's major natural spaces fall under a complex tangle of control by the City's Parks, Schools, Public Works, and Transportation Departments; the Boston Redevelopment Authority; state agencies like the Metropolitan District Commission; authorities and quasi-public agencies like the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority and Massachusetts Water Resources Administration.

**Development pressures** also pose urgent challenges to the city's parks system. Whether it is a private developer planning to build on an urban wild or the City feeling forced to utilize park land for a new school building site, there are always threats to existing parks and natural spaces.

## Actions

### The state should . . .

- **Ensure public transit access to major city parks.** The two major pieces of the city's natural system that lack adequate transit access are Franklin Park and the Boston Harbor. Fortunately, a precedent exists for strong transit access to these places – the former trolley along Columbia Road. In 1998, a special shuttle from Forest Hills T station to Franklin Park ran for weekends; the \$6,000 expense was financed by the Franklin Park Zoo and the City's Transportation and Parks departments. But that experiment needs to be expanded, first to all



weekends and then to more permanent transit connections. If a new trolley system extended from Forest Hills Station through Franklin Park and Columbia Road to the University of Massachusetts, access to both Franklin Park and the harbor would be dramatically enhanced. Crosstown transit for non-park trips would also be enhanced dramatically. Another major transit improvement would be the extension of the Silver Line down Blue Hill Avenue from Dudley Square. The Mayor's efforts to improve Blue Hill Avenue from Grove Hall to Franklin Park have already yielded impressive investments in business and residential development. Supplementing those improvements with a transitway down Blue Hill Avenue would create a direct connection between Grove Hall, Franklin Park, and the Neponset River Reservation. [see *MAP of Franklin Park*]

- **Improve bike and pedestrian paths along the parkways.** The Metropolitan District Commission's parkway system already provides beautiful, tree connections to many parks and other resources – but they are automobile-oriented and not bicycle-friendly. The MDC should develop parkway design standards that emphasize bicycle and pedestrian use, and then rebuild the sidewalks and paths to those standards. Ensure that the connections and crossings throughout the system are safe and accessible. Provide signage and maps that display the parkways' connections to the Neponset River at Mattapan Square, the Charles River and the Gardner Street park in West Roxbury, and Stony Brook Reservation in Roslindale and Hyde Park.

- **Work with City agencies to create one or more fairgrounds to accommodate the demands of major festivals and large events.** By providing large, accessible fairgrounds where large groups can gather without being a burden on surrounding neighborhoods, the City will be protecting its existing assets while investing in vital new assets. These fairgrounds could serve as playing fields when large events are not scheduled. These events should provide adequate parking facilities, as well as shuttles and other connections to transit nodes. Possible sites identified by the Parks Department include Readville Yards in Hyde Park, the former Boston State Hospital site in Mattapan, the South Boston Waterfront, the Allston Yards, the University of Massachusetts at Columbia Point in Dorchester, and sites along the Melnea Cass Boulevard and Columbus Avenue corridor in Roxbury. [see *SIDE events and festivals*]

- **Develop a plan to enhance and manage Stony Brook Reservation.** Stony Brook Reservation is an untapped resource for people throughout the city. The forested park boasts mountain biking and hiking trails, picnic areas, and places for quiet walks. But the access to the reservation is limited at times and the trails need improvements. The Metropolitan District Commission should develop a plan to actively manage the reservation and hire a staff member to carry out that plan. [see *SIDE Stony Brook Reservation*] [see *MAP of Stony Brook Reservation*]

### **The city should...**

- **Extend the network of citywide parks** – The character of Boston's citywide parks systems was established in the nineteenth century when Frederick Law Olmsted led a team of planners and engineers to create the Emerald Necklace. As important as it is to maintain and enhance that system, it is also important to build on it. Several developments in recent years provide opportunities to extend the Emerald Necklace into a broader network of natural spaces, as well as add new natural spaces to the system. One of the greatest opportunities is presented by the closing of the Boston State Hospital, which lies to the south of Franklin Park. A community-based planning process has produced ambitious plans for creation of a new Boston Nature Center, to be operated by the Massachusetts Audubon



Society, as well as housing, offices, and other environmentally sound developments. [see *SIDE Boston Nature Center*] [see *SIDE Heart of the City+*] [see *MAP of Heart of the City*]

The Charles-to-Charles Initiative is another vital project for connecting Boston's natural spaces. The Charles River defines both the northern and southern borders of Boston. The source of the Charles River lies at Boston Harbor by Beacon Hill and Back Bay, continues along Allston/Brighton and Cambridge, wraps around Newton, and connects to Boston's south at West Roxbury. More than a quarter century ago, parks visionaries called for Boston, Brookline, and Newton to use their resources and authority to acquire or protect green spaces between the northern and southern edges of the Charles River. The Charles-to-Charles document, underwritten by the Boston Conservation Commission, maintained that protection of properties along this corridor were essential to strengthen the seamlessness of the area's natural spaces, provide adequate recreational areas for the region's underserved residents, shape the character of urban development, preserve existing natural spaces, conserve wetlands, and coordinate appropriate development. [see *SIDE Charles-to-Charles+*] [see *MAP of the Charles-to-Charles*] Blue Hill Avenue offers another promising extension of the existing citywide parks system. Now a disconnected thoroughfare connecting Roxbury's Grove Hall in the north with the Town of Milton in the south, Blue Hill Avenue offers a unique opportunity to improve transit access and natural spaces at the same time. On the northern portions of the avenue lie some of the greatest green spaces in the city, such as Franklin Park, Hirambe Park, the Boston Nature Center, Forest Hills Cemetery. At the southern end of the avenue lies the Neponset River and, further south, the Blue Hills Reservation. Blue Hill Avenue could become the main "green" corridor in the city, linking the neighborhoods of the city's geographic center with the priceless water and reservations to the south.

- **Fix the broken nodes of the citywide parks system.** The critical challenge of a citywide system of natural spaces is to repair the intersections where large gaps discourage users from walking, running, and bicycling from one natural space to another. These gaps are usually created by destructive placement of highways and high-volume roads, which create an intimidating and dangerous environment for people not using cars. The key nodes and possible responses, from north to south, follow:

- *The Charlesgate Underpass Park.* Now marred by outdated design and confusing traffic patterns on the Bowker Overpass (which connects Boylston Street with Storrow Drive), this park that straddles Commonwealth Avenue could provide a lively civic space that connects the Muddy River and the Charles River. The eventual replacement of the heavy-looking Bowker Overpass with a sleeker version will allow greater light in the parks below. Creation of well-differentiated spaces in the parks is critical, as is highlighting the beauty of the meandering Muddy River. Traffic noise from the Massachusetts Turnpike should be shielded from the park, but the shield should be transparent to allow light and views of the Pike. Building some kind of pedestrian access over Storrow Drive to the Charles River Esplanade – a foot bridge is one possibility – would foster better pedestrian circulation.

- *Riverway and Jamaicaaway connections to Olmsted Park.* Crossing these former parkways poses dangers to pedestrians and bicyclists. Enforcement of the road's 30-miles-per-hour speed limit is unlikely without major redesign or allowance of parallel parking at select times. Placement of traffic signals along these roadways is critical to improve safety and connections between the neighborhoods of Mission Hill and Jamaica Plain and their parks.



➤ *The Arborway.* The stretch from Jamaica Pond to the northern tip of the Arnold Arboretum is dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists because of the speed of automobile traffic. One solution would be to close off automobile traffic on the so-called service lanes – either permanently or during peak recreation periods like weekends and holidays. Strategic placement of traffic signals is also critical to improving this node. Traffic studies show that the volume of traffic does not require both the central and service lanes.

➤ *The walkway from Forest Hills Station to Franklin Park.* This quarter-mile stretch is dangerous and unpleasant for pedestrians and bicyclists because it does not provide seamless paths that are separated from the high-speed automobile traffic. Construction of such paths, along with enhancements of the traffic circle by the park and the construction of an attractive gateway to the park, would make a dramatic impact. Development of the vacant parcel on the south of the park rotary could provide a regional attraction.

➤ *Circuit Drive in Franklin Park.* The road that runs from west to east accommodates cars and buses better than pedestrians and bicyclists. Construction of a pedestrian and bike path for the full length of Circuit Drive is essential to the park's attractiveness and safety. Longterm plans could include construction of a special trolley through the park from Forest Hills Station to Columbia Road and then to Columbia Point.

➤ *The Columbia Road entrance to Franklin Park.* Improve the entrance to the Franklin Park Zoo from Blue Hill Avenue with a dramatic gateway could improve the overall business and residential character of the Franklin Field community. In the long term, making this node a signature space could create momentum for building a special transitway from the Zoo to Columbia Point.

➤ *Columbia Road corridor.* Redesign and rebuild Columbia Road as a truly "green" connection between Franklin Park and Boston Harbor. Take advantage of the roadway's width, and build tree-lined bicycle and pedestrian paths. [see *SIDE Columbia Road+*] [see *MAP of Columbia Road*]

- **Enhance the design of citywide parks.** Design is a critical element of the improvement of all citywide systems. Over the years, the needs of many parks, parkways, and other natural spaces have changed with shifts in recreational patterns and the makeup of nearby communities. The most dramatic change of recent years is the increased reliance on automobile transportation and the dispersal of community life. The automobile has created a zip-in-and-out approach to park use, which undermines efforts to make the park more attractive for everyday users. The qualities that are essential for neighborhood users – attractive approaches, good fencing and other "edge" design, and well-marked internal spaces – get lost when people drive to a single destination in their cars and then leave without exploring the whole park. Many edges of parks do not create positive connections with pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. Parks need to be redesigned to present an attractive "face" to drivers and transit users as well as pedestrians and bicyclists. The edges of parks should provide an attractive view inside the park, many entrances that invite passersby into the park, strong signage that guides people to specific attractions, and imposing landmarks that help orient people to the park and its internal spaces. Inside the park, pedestrian paths must be constructed to provide many choices for people walking or bicycling. Each path should lead to a special place that can be a significant destination or a worthwhile resting spot or place to pause for a limited period. Throughout the park, visitors should be able to find benches, public toilets, and other appropriate amenities.





- **Develop a maintenance master plan for all city parks.** The Boston Parks and Recreation Department has made major strides in the improvement and maintenance of city parks. But to care for a growing inventory of park spaces – which will soon include new parks at Gardner Street, the Boston Harbor Islands, and along the surface of the submerged Central Artery – requires major new resources and systems.

#### **Businesses and community institutions should . . .**

- Identify ways that improvements in the citywide system of parks can enhance their longterm futures – and commit to promoting those improvements. Three times in the 1990s, flooding of the Muddy River caused tens of millions of dollars of damage to hospitals, museums, and universities located in the Fenway and Mission Hill. As a result of these extreme expenses, these organizations forged alliances to press for dredging of the Muddy River. Other public, private, and nonprofit institutions are also affected by problems in Boston's Emerald Necklace. The communities surrounding Franklin Park would benefit from enhancements to the design and maintenance of the park, as well as improvements to the traffic patterns through and around the park. All over the city, the fortunes of institutions can be enhanced with improvements to the city's system of parks and natural spaces. Institutions should be challenged to fight for improvements in parks that enhance their neighborhoods and business operations.

#### **Advocacy groups should . . .**

- **Develop databases and other materials that document the short- and long-term challenges for citywide park systems.** Advocacy groups like the Boston Greenspace Alliance and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy have a unique role as independent overseers of Boston's citywide park systems. They can compile and disseminate data that helps to develop community consensus for major improvements in the system. They should seize that role to help the Parks Department provide leadership on the restoration and extension of the system.



## INITIATIVE: INVESTING IN OUR PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Well-designed parks and natural spaces all require significant financial resources. Parks can no more be left to “natural” processes for everyday care than can houses or neighborhoods. Even some of the “wilder” elements of the city’s natural environment – such as urban wilds, gardens, and rivers – require significant resources for everyday maintenance and use. Paths and stairs need to be built and repaired. Hills and riverbanks need to be landscaped and stabilized. Litter needs to be picked up. Playing fields need to be repaired. Young trees need to be nurtured, and mature trees need to be trimmed. Boston possesses all of the tools it needs to take on these tasks – dedicated and concerned citizens, progressive city and state agencies and policies, and active nonprofit groups. The missing piece is funding. Boston must obtain greater financial resources to build on its natural and civic assets.

### Vision

Boston should develop the fiscal tools it needs to place it on a par with other cities for funding the acquisition, design, maintenance, and programming of parks and natural spaces. As a short-term goal, Boston should commit itself to providing at least 1 percent of its total operating budget to parks. Boston needs significantly more money for major investments in parks and natural spaces in all neighborhoods, as well as a steady revenue stream to maintain natural spaces without having to pit one neighborhood against another. Every community in the city should have great places for people of all ages to enjoy active and passive recreation year-round. Following the “best practices” of cities like Chicago and Minneapolis, which devote significantly more funds to design and maintenance of parks all over the city, the city should adopt a financing system that pays for aggressive programs of investment and maintenance.

### Assets and opportunities

One of the greatest assets that Boston possesses is that the **public supports property tax increases** of up to one percent to protect parks and natural spaces, preserve historic resources, and pay for efforts to clear the air and water. In a survey commissioned by the Trust for Public Land, 59 percent of respondents said that they would support a tax increase to create a Community Preservation Fund that provides localities with money for development of parks and trails, acquisition and maintenance of nature preserves, preservation of historic sites, and improvements to air and water quality. Voters in every region of the state said they would support such a levy; the greatest margins of support included Boston and southern and central Massachusetts. Some 90 percent of all respondents favored passage of the state Community Preservation Act, which would give local voters the authority to raise money for natural and historic resources.

Bostonians have developed a **consensus on how the money should be spent**. Voters have expressed a strong support for extra government spending for projects that yield clear results. Voters also show a strong appreciation for projects that use waterfront and green space improvements to enhance the overall quality of life and economic character of the neighborhoods. Projects to enhance parks and natural spaces can be defined clearly and completed within reasonable periods of time to demonstrate to the public the results of their tax and other contributions. Programs to improve citywide parks, the Boston Harbor and the city’s



five rivers, and neighborhood parks, playgrounds, gardens and wilds – especially if they are designed to insure equity in investments – could create positive impacts for every neighborhood in the city.

Boston benefits from one of the nation's most groups of **active and committed parks advocates**, ranging from neighborhood organizations to corporate partnerships. Most of the resources are devoted toward capital expenditures, with relatively few funds available to support maintenance costs. (Detailed accounting of these contributions is not available.) The most active friends groups speak for the most visible and heavily used parks – such as the Public Garden, Commonwealth Avenue Mall, Franklin Park, and the rest of the Emerald Necklace. But other groups are active all over the city including The Boston Natural Areas Fund which works to secure funding for new parks, wilds, and gardens; and numerous watershed associations that work diligently to promote the cleanup and development of Boston's harbor and five rivers.

### Barriers and challenges

Massachusetts and Boston **governments have devoted less money, historically**, to parks and other community resources than other cities and states. Boston's legacy of institutional independence – which has shaped cultural and artistic organizations for more than a century – extends as well to parks and other community resources. While acknowledging the importance of private and nonprofit investments, the next generation needs to develop a new social compact in which public monies play a greater role in strengthening public places while private and nonprofit organizations make their spaces more accessible to people across the city.

**Parks need a steady stream of revenues for maintenance** as well as new acquisitions and enhancements. The Parks Commissioner has stated that any new additions to the city's inventory of parks, playgrounds, wilds, and gardens must be accompanied by workable commitments to stewardship. The Parks Department spends 49 percent of its revenues on maintenance of spaces including cemeteries. The Commissioner's policy provides a prudent reminder that parks are only as good as the care and resources devoted to their maintenance. Appropriate portions of any new revenues for parks and natural spaces must be devoted to renovation and upkeep of parks all over the city.

Whatever funding devices are adopted to improve urban spaces, parks and natural spaces face **competition with other civic causes** for funding. Because of dramatic cutbacks during previous periods of fiscal retrenchment, parks are not the only kind of investments that have lagged in recent years. Housing, cultural activities, schools, family and social services, and preservation also need more funding to make their full contribution to a better city. All of these separate needs must develop sophisticated strategies to avoid a zero-sum game in which investment in one area comes at the expense of another.

**Expenditures for parks have varied greatly over the twentieth century.** During economic downturns, parks have borne a disproportionate share of budget cuts because they have been viewed as less "essential" to the economy and life of the city. Parks expenditures have ranged between 0.6 and 1.0 percent of total city expenditures in the past 15 years; today, the figure is 0.7 percent. Downturns have occurred during the two world wars, the Great Depression, and the aftermath of the passage of the Proposition 2½ property-tax limitation measure. Despite recent increases in the operating budget for the Department of Parks and Recreation, in real terms the current budget is near an all-time low for the century. According to a study by the Winthrop Group, the city's park acreage of 2,200 is about two-thirds of the highest levels of the 1950s.



Including the expenditures of the Metropolitan District Commission, spending on parks and recreation lies near the mean in a sample of the nation's largest 25 cities.

**Boston's parks are used more intensely** than the parks of almost all other cities in the U.S. Some 10 million tourists come to Boston every year, putting an especially great strain on parks in the communities of Charlestown, the North End, Beacon Hill, Downtown, Back Bay, the South End, and the Fenway. The parks are also used by 1 million commuters who come into the city daily. Boston is one of only three cities in the U.S. – Washington and San Francisco are the others – with more jobs than residents.

The Parks Commission negotiates important community benefits with developers, but usually the **Commission negotiates with developers after other city agencies and boards have already obtained benefits** for housing and other benefits. The Commission is unable to get as many benefits as other agencies because it stands last in line.

## Actions

The state should . . .

- **Pass the Community Preservation Act.** This state initiative provides cities and towns with greater options for raising money for parks and natural spaces, historic resources, and neighborhood business districts. The Act would provide Boston with some of the tools it needs to improve its public realm, and encourage neighboring cities and towns to do the same. [see *SIDE CPA*]

The city should . . .

- **Establish formal maintenance and renovation cycles for all of the city's parks, playgrounds, gardens, and wilds.** Tot lots should be overhauled every 10 to 12 years, playing fields every six to seven years, passive spaces every 15 to 20 years. Parks Department officials should work with community organizations to determine priorities for overhaul and maintenance of parks and natural spaces.
- **Increase the capacity of the Department of Parks and Recreation.** Dramatically increase the staff responsible for maintenance of all parks across the city, from 25 to 60 for historic parks along the Emerald Necklace and from 60 to 120 for all of the other parks in the city.
- **Use new financial tools to finance parks acquisition and management.** The Trust for Public Land has identified a number of creative and fiscally responsible fiscal tools. Lease-purchase agreements allow a government agency to pay for acquisition of a park over time, reducing the front-end costs as well as interest payments. Certificates of participation represent a variation of the lease-purchase tool, with tax-free purchase arrangements designed to encourage private investors to take part in greenspace acquisition. Lease-revenue bonds involve nonprofit park foundations that acquire land and lease the park back to the city. Mitigation involves getting developers to provide parks as payment for the damage that their projects are likely to cause the environment. Business improvement districts allow associations to pay for parks and other improvements with the extra tax revenues that receive when property values rise; the government loans the association the money needed for the improvements and later gets the money back from the flow of higher tax revenues. [see *SIDE parks funding options (to come)*]
- **Recognize and support friends groups more aggressively as they work to improve parks, gardens, and wilds all over the city.** The City has no comprehensive assessment of the





contribution of friends and other community contributions to Boston's parks and natural spaces. In order to honor the contributions of these organizations – and help them play a greater and more consistent role in the life of the natural city – the City needs a comprehensive annual survey. It also needs to work with these organizations to set goals, assess achievements, and develop strategies to make parks and natural spaces an integral part of community development.

- **Appoint a liaison to work with the Parks Department and the Boston Redevelopment Authority.** Over the years, the responsibility for parks planning and development has shifted back and forth from the BRA and the Parks Department. To assure that parks development occurs within the overall context of community planning, the BRA should hire a fulltime team of liaisons to build parks planning into all other planning. Parks liaisons should to promote parks issues early in the negotiation process over community benefits from development.

### **Businesses and institutions should . . .**

- **Invest in parks and natural resources.** Across the United States, cities and towns have adopted a number of private-based new sources of money for parks and civic spaces. One of the most promising is payments in lieu of taxes. PILOTs provide a useful tool to encourage non-profit, tax-exempt organizations to contribute to public improvements. Such payments are negotiated between the City and colleges and universities, hospitals, churches, non-profits, private schools, and exempt organizations. Donation of land for parks and other public purposes is the most direct form of PILOTs. Development of maintenance plans for green spaces near these institutions is another possibility. Yet another approach would be to allow free public access to nonpublic property. Assistance with programming public spaces could also provide a way for non-profits to make contributions to public needs.

- **Establish clear standards of performance for partnerships.** As the City comes to rely more on partnerships to keep up parks, playgrounds, and other spaces, it needs more formal and comprehensive tools to monitor those partners. The City should perform an audit of existing partnerships to determine how well agreements are spelled out – and how well partners meet those obligations. Quarterly budgets and work records should be required of every institution that has agreed to provide services to parks, playgrounds, and other natural spaces. The City should consider requiring partners to post bonds to assure full performance of obligations under agreements with the City and billing partners that do not fulfill their responsibilities.



## SUPPORTING INITIATIVE: PLAYING FIELDS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

The city's natural environment takes many forms besides the places where people gather to enjoy the diversity and richness of landscapes and rivers, wilds and gardens. As important as those natural spaces are to the definition and life of the community, they are not enough to provide spaces of active, organized recreation for Boston's residents. People need places to play games – baseball and softball, basketball and football, soccer and field hockey, tennis and volleyball, volleyball and gymnastics, and dozens of other games as well. Young people need to get outside and exercise their lungs and limbs, test themselves in competition against their peers. Older people need ways to diffuse the tension of the work week by playing games. Communities need places where people play for the pure joy and expression. It is with play that we find release, artistic expression, intent concentration, and communal identity. Competitive sports may not be for everyone, but they are vital to the health of Boston's people. Boston needs to provide the places to play, so that everyone is encouraged to play and make fitness a part of their lifestyle.

### Vision

Over the next generation, Boston will become an ever more diverse community – and that diversity will be reflected in the variety of games that young and old play. Boston must provide places for people to play all the games that give definition to people's lives. Every community should enjoy access to playing fields for all the major sports, as well as other popular pastimes. City Hall should coordinate the acquisition, development, maintenance, and scheduling of playing fields among various state and city agencies, leagues, schools, and clubs. Playing fields should be part of a larger citywide network of parks and civic spaces that encourages people to venture out to explore their neighborhoods – and the whole city.

### Assets and opportunities

Boston already possesses a **large network of playing fields** that provides places to play for thousands of people a year – and the City's Parks Department is building more each year. [*MAP of playing fields (to come)*]

The city also has a vast network of **sports people with a vast knowledge** of leagues, fields, scheduling, and other elements of a comprehensive system of playing fields. Boston's organized sports community is composed of entrepreneurs who have learned the needs of a wide range of sports and groups and what fields might be available for games and practices. These sports organizers have called for indoor sports complex for the winter months, better track facilities, use of safe artificial turf to protect fields from damage, and more sailing and boating centers.

The greatest asset is a **growing interest in sports** as girls and women are offered equal opportunity and new residents bring new games and passions to the playing fields. Since the advent of Title IX in 1972, the participation of girls and women in sports has increased dramatically. Before Title IX, girls were only 1 percent of all high school athletes; after 25 years, girls are 40 percent of all high school athletes. In the same period, Boston has welcomed diverse populations of immigrants who have brought with them games from soccer, rugby, and even cricket.



The city also owns many **underutilized fields and vacant parcels** that could complete the city's playing-field network. Identifying which parcels would be most appropriate for new playing fields should be part of the larger process of developing these spaces for housing, industry, cultural activities, transportation, and other uses.

In addition, there is a **growing awareness about the importance of exercise** for health. The ubiquity of magazines, school programs, hiking and other weekend recreational activities, and health clubs is powerful testimony to the importance that Americans place on fitness. So, too, is the popularity of professional sports and annual events like the Boston Marathon and the Charles River Regatta. Medical experts have argued that recreational opportunities are critical to the physical and psychological wellbeing of people of all ages. A number of new City initiatives are designed to help young people to develop good health habits. The Healthy Choices Program, a school-based program for students in the fifth to eighth grades, is designed to promote good nutrition and physical activity among young people. Under "FitNut" – short for Fitness and Nutrition Program – Boston Medical Center health professionals work with college students to provide nutrition and exercise activities for inner-city girls with weight and health problems. Planet Health, a middle-school nutrition program, has produced positive results reducing obesity. *[see SIDE playing fields and exercise]*

## Barriers and challenges

The greatest barrier to development of a citywide system of playing fields is **lack of coordination of existing facilities**. The Boston Youth Sports Congress, composed of more than 1,500 members, has held hundreds of meetings to develop an agenda for the next generation. To meet the needs of Boston's growing youth and adult programs, the Congress or some other entity inside City Hall needs more authority to coordinate the development and scheduling of playing fields.

Once the city addresses the coordination issue, it can address the issue of **inadequate space** for competitive sports. The City should develop a longterm plan for acquisition of new playing fields that meet the needs of all competitive sports, with a special attention on the sports of young people and the sports that have attracted growing numbers of players.

The **quality of the fields varies** in terms of maintenance, convenience, and design. Many of the city's fields go unused because of their inconvenience or inadequate playing condition. Transportation to fields is often difficult, especially for young people, because many leagues hold their games all over the city. League officials report that they know which fields are superior and which are deficient – in terms of design, upkeep, and convenience – and they avoid the lower quality fields when scheduling games. A major effort to rehabilitate fields and coordinate scheduling to match leagues with convenient fields would put more fields into use.

Another barrier is the **lack of a citywide organization** that speaks for competitive sports people as a constituency. League officials are usually so intent on meeting the seasonal needs of their teams that they do not make common cause with other sports organizations. Many sports leagues, in fact, compete with each other over the design and allocation of space, undermining their collective authority as voices of youth and adult recreation.

## Actions

The state should . . .



- **Address issues of legal liability.** By establishing standard non-liability agreements, and perhaps providing other incentives for owners of playing fields to allow their use by others, the City would make the best use of its existing resources. Many league officials do not use fields that would be convenient because of uncertainty about their legal status should players get injured in games or on the way to games. The playing fields coordinator could oversee the implementation of the legal non-liability program.

### **The city should . . .**

- **Establish minimum standards for access to playing fields.** National Recreation and Park Association has set a standard of one playground and one basketball facility for every 5,000 residents, one tennis facility and baseball/softball facility for every 3,000 residents, one swimming pool facility for every 20,000 residents, and one recreation center for every 50,000 residents. The national standard for parks is 10 acres of public open space for every 1,000 persons in urban areas. Overall, Boston has 9.6 acres of park space per 1,000 people, which comes close to meeting the standard. But the shares of park space vary from a low of 0.6 acres per 1,000 persons in Chinatown and 1.4 acres per 1,000 persons in the South End to a high of 26.3 acres per 1,000 persons in Hyde Park.

- **Develop new models of acquisition, design, and maintenance.** Following the creative financing strategies for parks and natural spaces, the Parks, Schools, and other City departments could develop a variety of public, private, and nonprofit funding tools to improve the provision of playing fields around the city.

- **Develop full-day school initiatives that make better use of existing fields.** As Mayor Menino has developed national models for providing daylong educational opportunities with his 2-to-6 initiative, the City should consider developing experimental models for managing the school day. On an experimental basis, some schools could hold classes from 8 to 5, allowing students three “blocks” of time for classes, recreation, and vocational programs. A student might attend classes from 8 until 11, break for sports practice and lunch until 2, and then complete classes in the afternoon – or some variation of that mix-and-match schedule. Such an arrangement could put playing fields – and other school facilities – into active use more hours of the day.

- **Appoint a citywide playing fields coordinator.** Appointment of a new coordinator, who would manage the inventories of the Parks, Schools, and other City departments – as well as other facilities under contractual agreement with the City – would allow for the most efficient use of existing facilities. It would also allow the city to develop a careful analysis of what areas of the city are most in need of new facilities, what improvements can be made to transportation accommodations, and what strategies might be appropriate to maintain playing fields. The development of an updated database and scheduling standards would take much of the guess work out of the operation of leagues and school recreation programs.





## **SUPPORTING INITIATIVE: BUILDING NATURE INTO THE CITY'S FABRIC**

The wealth of any community's environment extends beyond the public places of active and passive recreation. Many private and nonprofit organizations own parks, gardens, wilds, and playing fields that comprise a major part of the city's natural network. Access to these spaces is governed by a melange of laws, regulations, agreements, and informal practices. In addition, a whole range of natural elements – trees, private landscapes, and even back yards and parking lots – is critically impact to the ecological quality of the city. These spaces not only comprise thousands of acres, but also help to define the character of Boston's communities. They also offer a way for everyone in the city – homeowners, businesses, universities and other institutions – to become part of a greater civic fabric, as well as to respect the needs of the natural environment.

### **Vision**

As the city celebrates its fourth centenary, Boston should build nature into every aspect of its planning and development. Boston's neighborhoods should offer beautiful and well-maintained parks, playgrounds, and gardens, but also protect urban wilds all over the city. The ecology of the community also should be promoted with a comprehensive plan for planting and caring for trees in every neighborhood. Over the next generation, Boston should commit itself to dramatically reducing impermeable surfaces in every neighborhood that lead to runoff, pollution of waterways, and flooding. Boston should develop a "green compact" with neighborhood associations, businesses and developers, and major institutions to insure that ecological concerns are built into everything that these entities do. Because the legal and informal practices governing these spaces varies, the City should develop a whole "menu" of interrelated policies that enhances these spaces, connects them with the urban context, and makes them available for appropriate use by all Bostonians.

### **Assets and opportunities**

**Boston set a national standard with its development of urban wilds** in neighborhoods all over the city. The publication of the visionary report *Boston Urban Wilds: A Natural Area Conservancy Program* in 1976 established an agenda that drives the development of natural spaces to this day. The report by the Boston Redevelopment Authority defined urban wilds as unprotected areas in the city "that have retained or reestablished considerable natural character." By 1990, when the Boston Natural Areas Fund produced the only update of the urban wilds report, 26 of the 143 wilds identified in the report had received protection and pieces of 10 others were had received protection.

A number of **federal and state programs provide funds for the protection of valuable natural spaces** from development. The Land and Water Conservation Fund protects properties that have benefited from LCWF investments. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act and its successor Transportation Efficiency Act have provided funds for the enhancement of significant historic and natural spaces. The Massachusetts Urban Self-Help programs funded by the Open Space Bond Act of 1996 can be used to purchase conservation restrictions.



Boston's neighborhoods provide a **hospitable environment for tree-lined streets** that could play a major role in enhancing air quality. Trees are one of the most popular enhancements that residents seek for enhancement of public spaces in their communities. Boston's residents understand a truth that Allan Jacobs offered in his classic book *Great Streets* – that trees offer the single best strategy for improving the life of public spaces in cities. Trees help to clean the air, moderate the extremes of temperature, provide protection from the elements, and create a gentle appearance. In community meetings across the city, residents asked for more trees and a comprehensive strategy to connect those trees to improvements in public and private spaces alike.

The Parks and Recreation Department has embarked on a **major effort to count trees in every neighborhood of the city**. Volunteers in each neighborhood are trained at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and guided by Parks Department officials. Data are entered into city computers, where they are updated whenever new reports of tree plantings, damages, and losses are recorded. In the city's signature parks – like the Boston Common and Public Garden – trees are mapped and planned carefully to prevent a hodgepodge that would undermine the appearance of the parks.

## Barriers and challenges

Many of Boston's urban wilds are **threatened by development pressures**. The growing need for housing, the development of new retailing spaces, the expansion of institutions such as universities and hospitals, and the growing demand for parking facilities have exposed many wilds to development. As the 1990 BNAF report noted, for many city agencies not only have no mission to protect natural spaces, but the agencies specifically target them for development. The BNAF reported that 83 of the wilds remained unprotected and more than 600 acres of wilds had been lost.

The **City has not coordinated its many agencies** in the preservation and development of urban wilds. Because of complex ownership patterns and legal relationships, the protection of urban wilds requires a multi-pronged citywide policy that has not yet emerged. Over the years, the title to wilds and the burden of planning has shifted from the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Boston Conservation Commission to the Boston Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks Department has hired a fulltime coordinator for the city's urban wilds and has included wilds in the five-year plans required by the Commonwealth to receive state funding. But this urban wilds specialist has not become the point person for the City's larger urban wilds policy, with the authority to work with the BRA and other agencies at appropriate stages of the planning and development process.

The City faces severe **funding limitations to protect private property** from development. Many private property owners hold out to get the highest return on their investment, making it difficult for City agencies and nonprofit organizations to purchase land or negotiate agreements to assure protection and public access. The City's annual parks acquisition budget of \$250,000 is devoted almost exclusively to parks and playgrounds; even if it were devoted to wilds, it would be inadequate to leverage the funds that are needed to protect and enhance wilds. The City must adopt a multi-pronged strategy to pay for acquisition and protection of wilds. [*SIDE urban wilds (to come)*]

**Many trees all over the city have been neglected** by public agencies and private property-owners, with the result that many new trees struggle to survive and grow and the lives of many



old trees are endangered. The lack of a tree-counting initiative until three years ago has hampered the efforts of the Parks Department and other City agencies to address tree-related issues consistently in all neighborhoods. The City has been reactive; rather than taking the initiative on trees, it has tended to respond to community groups that can articulate their concerns to elected and other City officials. The result is that some streets have strong records of tree maintenance and acquisition, while others are spotty.

All over the city, **development projects have reduced the permeable surfaces** that help to protect against flooding and remove pollutants when the rainwater infiltrates. Buildings, driveways, roads, parking lots, and contaminated lots all trap water and produce run off that not only contaminates local waterways but also leads to occasional flooding.

## **Actions**

### **The city should . . .**

- **The Mayor should designate an official to coordinate the preservation and development of urban wilds throughout the city.** This official should implement an official policy statement from the city that governs the disposition of land and establishes a framework for working with private institutions. This official should be involved in the review of projects and policies of all development-related agencies of the city, including the BRA and the Departments of Neighborhood Development, Public Works, and Transportation. The official should be supported in his or her efforts to implement the priorities for preservation of wilds established in an update of the urban wilds report.
- **Formally adopt a “menu” of protection tools for urban wilds.** Take advantage of a full range of protection strategies, including acquisition, negotiated agreements with developers, and conservation easements. [*SIDE urban wilds protections (to come)*]
- **Develop plans in all neighborhoods to encourage public and private agencies to create more permeable surfaces to protect against runoff, flooding, and water pollution.** Following the model of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Boston should develop a strategy of streetscape improvements and maintenance that increases the overall share of permeable surfaces when possible. Driveways, parking lots, apartment complexes, retail establishments, college and medical campuses – all can be designed to absorb more rainwater when they are being constructed for the first time and when they come up for routine maintenance and rebuilding.
- **Develop a plan to plant trees on streets throughout the city.** Street trees have a dramatic impact on the “look and feel” of a street – but they also provide vital protection from wind, sun, and rain. The City should work with community groups in each neighborhood to determine where more trees need to be planted and to establish a reasonable schedule for implementing the plan.

### **Civic organizations should . . .**

- **Update the urban wilds report to establish priorities for protection of properties in every neighborhood of the city.** The Urban Wilds Report, last updated in 1990, provides the agenda for public, private, and nonprofit groups to protect the city’s last remaining natural spaces. These spaces are best known to community residents. Community organizations should collaborate with the Boston Greenspace Alliance to make sure that the inventory of wilds remains updated and strategies to protect the wilds are known to people in government agencies, private and nonprofit institutions, and communities across the city.



**Community organizations should . . .**

- **Working with task forces in every neighborhood, identify specific places where planting and placement of trees would dramatically increase the area's appearance and ecological quality.** The implementation of a plan for tree planting takes at least a generation to realize. Such a plan can only be realized if City agencies work with community groups to identify the specific places where new trees would make significant improvements to the community's public spaces. Haphazard placement of trees will not advance the overall cause of greening the neighborhoods because those trees will lack the care they need to thrive. Trees should be located at critical gateways to the neighborhoods, on mixed-use commercial streets, in and around parks, and along residential streets. Trees should not only be planted for their own sake, but also to advance a broader community design agenda that includes drawing attention to "signature" spaces and calming traffic on major streets.









## **Articulation of large spaces**

All across Boston, large spaces define the streets and the neighborhoods. How the edges of these spaces are designed can have a dramatic effect on the character of the larger community.

These large facilities – parks, cemeteries, university campuses, community centers, hospitals and health centers, stadiums, manufacturing plants, distribution facilities, utilities, rail and motor vehicle yards, working ports – take up parcels ranging from 10 to 500 acres. Their design is critical to the overall look and feel of the neighborhood.

Many of these large spaces are major attractions for the city and region and offer a great opportunity to show the best “face” of the community. Franklin Park, with the increasingly popular Zoo New England facing Blue Hill Avenue, is the largest park in the city. The hospitals at the Longwood Medical Area attract millions of visitors a year and dramatically shape the fortunes of adjacent neighborhoods. Campuses like the University of Massachusetts, Boston University, Northeastern University, and Harvard Business School also present an imposing face to the community.

A number of design standards should be applied to these large facilities:

- ✓ The “edges” of these facilities should be designed to feel accessible to the community. Fencing should allow passersby to peek into parks, campuses, and other attractive spaces. Cast-iron fencing provides just one way to allow some permeability of the edges. Whatever fencing and shrubbery is used, maintenance is critical to the overall appearance of the area.
- ✓ Large spaces should offer exciting buildings and landscape design that provides landmarks for the community. Buildings should offer a sense of place to the whole neighborhood. Strong architectural touches – spires, windows, ornamentation, grand entrances – can make even the most utilitarian building a sight to behold. Old structures such as the Jamaica Plain breweries, the Chestnut Hill Reservoir pump houses, and Fenway Park enliven the community. If their design included fewer flourishes, they would have a negative effect.
- ✓ Unsightly activities should be shielded from the public view as much as possible. Utility sheds, bus and rail yards, manufacturing spaces, parking lots and garages, and highway ramps should be buffered with more attractive development. Large-scale facilities, as much as possible, should provide pedestrian-oriented activities at the edges.
- ✓ Large spaces should provide continuity with the surrounding street grid and architectural styles. Most large facilities are cut off from the normal flow of traffic in the neighborhood. Under the “superblock” design approach of the 1960s and 1970s, urban street grids were eliminated on the campus of developments such as Charles River Park and various shopping malls. But to create a healthy flow inside and outside large-scale facilities, continuity of street grids is absolutely essential.
- ✓ Signage should provide elegant orientation to a campus and area. Especially when large projects are under way, residents and merchants are curious to know who their new neighbors are. The new Boston Nature Center evoked suspicions among neighbors because of the lack of good signage to explain the construction. Even longtime facilities need to provide guidance to users. The Arnold Arboretum’s signs provide eye-level maps that help visitors understand where they are and where they are going.



## Charles River

The Charles River runs westerly on the northern edge of the City from the Boston Harbor along Charlestown, the West End, Beacon Hill, Fenway/Kenmore, and Allston-Brighton. After looping around the City of Newton, the Charles picks up in West Roxbury and joins the new Millennium Park at the old Gardner Street dump site.

The Charles River is a regional showpiece and vital piece of Boston's recreational system. The Charles River Esplanade contains playing fields, a swimming pool, a concert shell, jogging and bicycle trails, a community boating house, and places for sunbathing and picnicking and other more passive forms of recreation. The Esplanade provides critical connections along the northern edge of the City but is fragmented along the way and feels unsafe and unsightly along Storrow Drive and Soldier's Field Road. Access to the riverfront is also irregular.

The Metropolitan District Commission, which owns and maintains the river reservation, has completed a draft of a new master plan. The plan aims to enhance the pedestrian and bicycle access within the reservation and with nearby neighborhoods, "calm" traffic along the arteries that line the river, balance uses along the river, provide better spaces for family activities, create stronger connections to the water's edge, improve vegetation and wildlife elements along the river, and distribute large events more evenly along the waterfront. Although the plan focuses primarily on public access and uses, environmental issues are also critical to the overall integrity of the area. The water is expected to be fishable and swimmable by 2005, offering not only more uses but also dramatically improving the image of the area.

### LOWER BASIN

Described by Charles Eliot as the city's "court of honor," the Lower Basin of the Charles River is a place of civic identity and beauty. Stretching about 2.5 miles in length and up to 2,500 feet in width, the Lower Basin has the look and feel of an urban lake defined on the Cambridge side by vertical seawalls and on the Boston side by soft curvilinear banks. The gold dome of the Massachusetts State House and the Longfellow Bridge offer a beautiful backdrop for the Basin. Prepared by Goody, Clancy & Associates, the Metropolitan District Commission has created a Charles River Basin Master plan for the Reservation. The following descriptions will discuss the important areas of the Reservation and summarize the intentions of the MDC.

1. **Charles River Dam.** Built in 1910, the Charles River Dam created a stable river basin where a tidal river had previously existed. The construction of the Museum of Science in 1951 eliminated the original park atop the dam, creating a major obstacle to access from one riverbank to another. A parking garage, hangs over the original edge of the dam, covering the hand operated lock which once served small vessels and crowds the historic boat house and stables. Metropolitan District Commission plans call for reconnecting the north and south banks of the Reservation with a new pathway, restoring and reusing the Lock House, Stables and Pavilion, softening the appearance of the parking garage, establishing a multi-use bike path along the upriver face of the Science Museum, and restoring the historic boathouse for an appropriate marine use.
2. **The East Cambridge Front.** Constructed in the 1900's, the East Cambridge Seawall is approximately 2,200 feet long and 80 feet wide and allows stunning views of the Lower Basin, the Longfellow Bridge, and the Boston Skyline. Two parks along this stretch of the reservation, both of which lack activity. Front Park is almost entirely cut off from the River by trees, and Lechmere Park is almost completely deserted except for the occasional



fisherman. The MDC hopes to connect this isolated segment to the rest of the reservation by screening adjacent development with parkway trees, broadening the usable area of the strip, and animating the Front with increased activity. The MDC also has recommended replacement of the trees along the Front at the edge of the Parkway, opening the parkland for passive uses as well.

3. **Broad Canal.** One of the last vestiges of the river's industrial past, the granite-lined Broad Canal off the Lower Basin is isolated and rarely used. The mouth of the Canal is on one of the most unused and inaccessible stretches of the Reservation, the Longfellow Bridge Viaduct. Pedestrians can only get to the Canal by crossing over four lanes of high-speed traffic, while only the smallest of boats can get to the Canal below two permanently lowered drawbridges. MDC plans call for reconnecting the canal with the Lower Basin through new pathways and the replacement of bridges, improving boating access, and preserving and interpreting the industrial artifacts of the canal.
4. **Leiderman Field (Charlesbank).** Dominated by active uses, including two softball fields, two tennis courts, a spray pool and playground, and the Lee Pool, this area is increasingly used for large events. The open space along this area lacks benches or any sense of enclosure and is not conducive to passive activities. The athletic fields have no bleachers, score boards, or lighting. MDC is currently trying to reinforce this landscape for passive as well as active uses, remove or at least reconfigure the parking areas to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and cars, and design and program the Charlesbank as a flexible multiuse area.
5. **Longfellow Bridge.** Built in 1906, the Longfellow Bridge (also known as the "Salt and Pepper") is the oldest and most architecturally distinguished bridge on the river. Despite its beauty and social value, Longfellow Bridge is one of the weakest links in the Reservation. On the north side of the bridge the viaduct has cut off and isolated a piece of the old MIT Front and the access stairs to the bridge, leaving no safe or obvious connection between the river path and the Bridge walkway. Connections on the south side of the bridge are not much better, leaving cyclists and skaters scrambling up or down several flights of stairs and crossing traffic to reach the pedestrian bridge to the reservation. The MDC is considering proposals to improve lighting, restore the bridge itself (steel and stone structures, rails steps and towers), re-stripe bicycle lanes, construct a 120-foot aerial bridge, and improve pathways.
6. **The Esplanade.** Since its creation in the 1890's, the Esplanade has undergone two major transformations in form and character. In 1931, the Esplanade was expanded to prevent "topple" waves, which interfered with boating. In designing this expansion of the Esplanade, Arthur Shurcliff (his predecessor was Charles Eliot), laid out strait paths and a series of formal overlooks and boat landings along the shore, while at the same time softening the appearance with a massing of trees. With the construction of Storrow Drive 1949, much of the Esplanade was threatened to be obliterated. Arthur Shurcliff was commissioned again to reshape the Esplanade from the BU Bridge to the Charles River Dam. This area is by far the most popular park space in the MDC system.

✓ **Hatch Shell** – Increasing use of the Hatch Shell and the surrounding areas, has led to high levels of soil compaction, bare patches of earth, and destroyed vegetation. The MDC has called for the number of concerts at this center, as well as minimize the interference of the concerts.

✓ **Lagoons and Boat Haven** – Storrow Lagoon, originally designed for ice skating in the winter months and model boating in the summer was the first of a group of lagoons that were added to the Esplanade. The newly added lagoons were intended for the use of





canoes. The MDC has called to limiting the use of the lagoons to muscle powered boats only.

✓

**Governors Landing** - One of the grandest formal gestures in the Basin,

Governors Landing provides a frame to the Boat Basin. Because of being undercut, possibly by winter ice, the steps of the Landing have collapsed, making it one of the most visible signs of disrepair in the entire Basin. Stabilizing and restoring the steps and rails at Governor's Landing is one of MDC's highest priorities.

7. **MIT.** The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has defined the Cambridge side of the Charles River since its move in 1916. Memorial Drive matches the institutional character of the campus. The trees on either side of Memorial Drive are in poor condition, and the major soil compaction from the off-path runners is killing the trees. Pedestrian safety is the MDC's greatest concern.
8. **Charlesgate and the Fens.** Charlesgate is the missing link between the two most important open space systems in the Boston area: the Charles River Reservation and the Emerald Necklace. A primary goal for the MDC and open space advocates is the reestablishment of a strong pedestrian link between the Basin and the Emerald Necklace. In addition, the MDC plans to transform the Charlesgate Overpass Park into a healthy and attractive park area for a variety of users. (See Sidebar on page --)

## UPPER BASIN

Approximately 6,000 miles in length and varying from 300 feet to 1000 feet in width, the Upper Basin follows the curvilinear course of the old river channel and has retained a strong river character.

9. **The Boston University Bridge.** Built in 1928, the BU Bridge marks the transition from the middle and upper basin where the river follows its original course to the lake-like expansion of the lower basin. Pedestrian access from one river shore to the next is poor, and the MDC master plan calls for improving the continuity and safety of movement along and across the River.
10. **Magazine Beach.** Originally, the site of a military powder magazine, Magazine Beach was established in 1899 after the filling of the marshes provided an opportunity for a park and bathing beach. As the water in the basin worsened during the 1950s, swimmers were forced to retreat to a newly built pool nearby. Since the 1950s, the changes in uses at this beach have resulted in a disjointed and worn out condition at Magazine Beach. The facilities at Magazine Beach bear little relation to the river or to the rest of the park and are in poor condition. Public services are available only during the swimming season. The intensity of use has created bare spots on the fields. In its Master Plan, the MDC calls for diversifying and strengthening the landscape, improving pathway continuity and shoreline access, managing the use of open space to sustain the landscape use of the park, and improving the overall maintenance of the park and facilities.
11. **Allston Landing / Turnpike.** In the 1970's, the narrowing of the Storow Drive allowed for the white bicycle path and the addition of landscaping on both sides of the parkway. Despite the effort to make this stretch more pedestrian-friendly, the noise and fumes of the Massachusetts Turnpike, rail yards, and parkway combine to make this segment very unpleasant. In its Master Plan the MDC has called for the creation of a better buffer between the traffic and the pedestrians, and reinforcement of the parkway character of Storow Drive.
12. **Genzyme Front.** The six-foot walkway and steep bank of this parkland is the result of the widening of both Soldiers Field Road and the accompanying side roads. This walkway is the site of frequent accidents between pedestrians, cyclists, and skaters and often results in users being pushed off the path. The MDC hopes to protect pedestrians from the threat of noise



and traffic, permitting access to the shorelines where possible, opening views upriver, adding a pedestrian phase to the existing traffic signal at Cambridge Street and Soldiers Field Road, and reconfiguring the pathway.

13. **Harvard Business School / Harvard College Houses.** The Harvard Business School, which occupies the onetime marsh, lands that separated Cambridge and Boston. Open grassy banks, low brick buildings, and views of Weeks Foot Bridge and Weld boathouse define this area. Most of the open fields are bare of vegetation and scoured by road sand. The lack of a parkway curbs has caused many cars to skid off the road into trees or streetlights. Preserving the open grass character of the banks and the views of the surrounding campus buildings, reinforcing the landscape character of the parkway, improving Soldiers Field Road, and substituting the lighting of Weeks Bridge are all objectives of MDC.
14. **Soldiers Field.** Soldiers Field, once the marshlands over which the Longfellow Mansion looked, was donated to Harvard in the 1870's and filled by the turn of the Century. The open athletic fields and wooden banks of this segment signal a pleasant transformation from an urban to a more rural character, but the parking lots detract from this attractive and historic landmark. The MDC hopes to reinforce the open space, which once characterized this area, by removing intrusive elements such as the guardrails, and reconfiguring the parking lots.
15. **Longfellow Park and London Plain Trees.** This section of the Basin begins to open with the Longfellow Park next to Mount Auburn Street on one side and the Harvard Athletic Fields across the River on the other side. The towering embrace of the London Plain Trees, the sweeping curve of the embankment, and the broad expanse of green lawn down to the water's edge are defining features of this segment. A playground conveniently located near a residential area and parking, is one of only a few in the middle basin. The MDC has called for preserving the open character of the banks and the landscape character of the parkway, creating a comfortable and safe pathway along the river and across the parkway, creating seating by the water, and providing more play structures which fit the park setting.
16. **Herter Park.** Herter Park, largest open parkland in the Basin, is a popular place for picnickers, skaters, cyclists, playing volleyball, fishing and canoeing, and any other activities one can think of. An island with an outdoor theatre and a building bridging from shore to island were created in the 1960's. Because of the lack of public transportation and the lack of visibility, these facilities are not as well utilized as they could be. The finish line to the Head of the Charles and the Run of the Charles canoe and kayak races, Herter Park is home to many other special events as well. Poor design leaves some areas of the park overcrowded and others underutilized. The main pathway through the park, which is part of the Paul Dudley White Bike Path, passes through a stretch of boardwalk which is one of the most popular areas of Herter Park. Joggers are forced to abandon the crowded pathway for dirt paths along the shore. The MDC hopes to maintain the rich mix of activities, resist inflexible special use facilities such as fenced athletic fields or skateboard rinks, and to create a better sense of order in the landscape.
17. **Hell's Half Acre.** The only substantial wetland area in the Basin, Hell's Half Acre got its name from the author Bernard DeVoto, who called for preservation of this unique urban wild. Because of the high number of park users, multiple paths wind through the wetland and the wooded area. A former boathouse blocks critical views to the Charles and to the Eliot Bridge. MDC's main objective is to full restore Hell's Half Acre as a healthy native wetland and laboratory for environmental education.
18. **Greenough Boulevard.** This one-mile stretch of parkway has the potential for great changes. The parkway's curving alignment creates a wonderful variety of views and the wetlands at either end of this segment provides a home to a large number of bird and animal



species. The MDC has called for widening the parkland and improving the pathway, strengthening the pathway, and creating an appealing loop to draw cyclists, joggers, pedestrians, and inline skaters from Herter Park.

19. **GSA Site – Arsenal Street.** The GSA site, given to the Department of War in 1920, is currently highly contaminated with radioactive waste. The Army Corps is in the middle of a cleanup process that should be completed in the next couple of years. When the Army Corps are finished with this process, close to nine acres will be accessible, with a pleasant small stream running down the western edge of the property. MDC plans call for reincorporating the land back into the reservation, and creating structured opportunities for athletic uses.
20. **Soldiers Field Road Extension.** Rather than following the river shore, this 8-foot wide pedestrian and bicycle path runs too close to the parkway. Unlike the tree lined pleasure drives of the classic landscape of Basin parkways, such characteristics are completely absent from this stretch of Soldiers Field Road. MDC plans call for improving the appearance and strengthening the parkway character of this road, reestablishing connections to the Charles, and widening the parkway to realize the original vision of the Reservation.
21. **Little Greenough.** A tree lined pleasure drive with views of the river; it is one of the nicest parkways in the Basin and has been carefully protected. The only drawback to this area is the continuous fence along the Arsenal site that detracts from the illusion of being in a natural setting, and cuts the Arsenal Park from the River. Goals of MDC are preserving and enhancing this exemplar parkway and better integrating it with its river setting.



## Charlesgate Park

One of the most awkward spaces in all of Boston is the Charlesgate park area near Commonwealth Avenue near Kenmore Square. The park, which includes the section of the Muddy River that feeds into the Charles River, extends from the Massachusetts Turnpike on the south to Storrow Drive on the north.

Because of the Bowker Overpass, which connects the Back Bay Fens to Storrow Drive, the park lies in the darkness on even the sunniest days. Nearby Kenmore Square offers one of the busiest activity centers in Boston. The Commonwealth Avenue Mall, a vital part of the Emerald Necklace, runs by the park. But few people venture into the Charlesgate park. Outdated design and landscaping do not invite passersby or neighbors to use the area.

The Charlesgate park was the subject of a design charrette – a special brainstorming session designed to provide creative planning options – in the fall of 1998. The charrette brought together more than 50 residents, landscape architects, planners, state and city officials. The charrette was coordinated by the Community Outreach Group of Radcliffe College. Boston 400 participated in the event.

The charrette produced a number of design ideas, which were displayed for public viewing as the Boston Public Library in 1999. Among the ideas:

- ✓ Replace the Bowker Overpass with a sleeker structure that allows more light into the area. Since the Bowker is structurally deficient, state officials say that it will need to be rebuilt early in the next century.
- ✓ Highlight the Muddy River as a centerpiece of the park. The river offers a number of pleasant spaces for sitting and contemplation. Landscaping is poor, the river bed has been allowed to deteriorate, garbage is strewn about, and few benches are provided for visitors.
- ✓ Block the noise from the southern section of the park by constructing a transparent wall. The wall could be designed as a climbing structure for children and adults, which provides views of the Mass Pike as well as the historic Fenway Studios on Ipswich Street. By establishing the Pike Wall as an attraction, the park would draw visitors.
- ✓ Provide “info kiosks” and “learning stations” at the median between the opposite lanes of traffic on Commonwealth Avenue. The support beams for the Bowker Overpass could be redesigned to provide bulletin boards for community and cultural events. The section that overlook the Muddy River could provide interactive learning stations that provide information about water quality, runoff and sewage, aquatic life, and cleanup efforts.
- ✓ Construct a pedestrian bridge over Storrow Drive to provide direct access to the Charles River Esplanade. Such a structure would create a reason for venturing toward the river that the park now lacks. The area near the river is one of the more beautiful spaces in the park.
- ✓ Tear down the stone walls that fragment the parks on both sides of Commonwealth Avenue. The walls, intended to restrict noise, instead block light and restrict access to some of the most exciting sections of the park.





## Charles-to-Charles

*From earliest days as a peninsular settlement, Boston has been surrounded by the Charles River. Flowing by West Roxbury on the southwest, it encircles Newton and Brookline and reappears as the northern boundary of Boston throughout the Charles River Basin.*

Excerpted from "Charles-to Charles"

January 1972

More than 25 years ago, the Brookline and Boston Conservation Commissions worked together to publish *Charles-to-Charles: A Conservation and Recreation Corridor for Boston, Brookline, and Newton*, a document that expressed a vision of building a greenway to connect the places where the Charles River borders both the north and south sides of the city.

The corridor that the group envisioned would connect a number of existing parks and natural spaces in both Boston and Brookline in a seamless system. Part of the corridor already exists in the portion of the Emerald Necklace from the Esplanade at Charlesgate, through the Back Bay Fens, along the Muddy River and the Riverway, to Jamaica Pond. From Jamaica Pond, the corridor diverges, connecting to Lars Anderson Park to the west and the Arnold Arboretum to the east. The two paths again converge at the confluence of the West Roxbury Parkway and the V.F.W. Parkway, and the corridor continues south along the V.F.W. Parkway and the cemeteries and parks to its west. The corridor ends at Cow Island Pond just south of the newly constructed Gardner Street park.

1. **Charles River Esplanade.** The Charles River Esplanade is one of Boston's most used recreational resources. The MDC has recently completed a master plan for the Charles River Basin that calls for improved bicycle and pedestrian paths, shoreline improvements, and the installation of various amenities.
2. **Charlesgate/Bowker Overpass.** The space between the Back Bay Fens and the Esplanade has been obscured by the overpass that connects Storrow Drive with local roads in the Fenway. A community-based planning effort is now underway to improve the park space itself and provide a seamless connection between the paths in the Fens and along the Esplanade.
3. **Back Bay Fens.** The "front door" of both the east and west sides of the Fenway residential neighborhood, the Back Bay Fens is a park with extensive active and passive uses. The Muddy River that runs through the park will soon be dredged to improve the rivers flow, reduce the risk of flooding, and improve the river's water quality.
4. **Riverway.** The Riverway's paths follow both sides of the Muddy River.
5. **Olmsted Park.** Olmsted Park is host to a number of active recreational activities including baseball games and outdoor concerts. Leverett Pond's new boardwalk makes it a destination for walkers and joggers.
6. **Jamaica Pond.** The end of the existing portion of the Charles-to-Charles corridor, Jamaica Pond is currently being renovated in keeping with the Emerald Necklace Master Plan. The Boston Parks and Recreation Department is stabilizing the edges of the pond, reconstructing the paths, and re-landscaping at the ponds edges.
7. **Arborway.** Connecting Jamaica Pond with the Arnold Aboretum, the Arborway is an important link in the Emerald Necklace, but its design is automobile-oriented making it feel dangerous to pedestrians and bicyclists. Community-based groups, including the Arborway



Coalition and a group working on the Emerald Necklace Greenway are currently working to improve the design and safety of this segment.

8. **Arnold Arboretum.** Operated by Harvard University, the Arnold Arboretum offers a manicured landscape with paths running through out, and a spectacular view of the surrounding area from the top of Peter's Hill.

9. **Hellenic Hill.** Nearly developed into condominiums two years ago, Hellenic Hill was saved by legislative intervention. The backdrop to Jamaica Pond, it is a potential link in the Charles-to-Charles corridor. The hill is currently owned by Hellenic College.

10. **Larz Anderson Park.** Larz Anderson Park is a 64 acre park with a commanding view of the City of Boston, an enclosed children's play area, picnic areas, ball fields, and a public skating rink.

11. **V.F.W. Parkway.** Part of the MDC's extensive parkway system, the V.F.W. Parkway is a beautiful, tree-lined boulevard.

12. **Cemeteries.** Several cemeteries border the Towns of Brookline and Newton.

13. **Gardner Street park.** Built on a former landfill, the Gardner Street park now offers over 90 acres of open space including several playing fields.

14. **Cow Island Pond.** Cow Island Pond is a segment of the Charles River. The original Charles-to-Charles report calls it "the only remaining natural landscape in the heart of metropolitan Boston."



## **Columbia Road**

Columbia Road has become known as the unfinished leg of Frederick Law Olmsted's Emerald Necklace. Running from Franklin Park to Boston Harbor, the boulevard offers an opportunity to connect the heart of the City to the water's edge. Many stretches of Columbia Road offer classic urban treasures: beautiful brick apartment buildings, attractive schools, active parks, an historic cemetery, and a vibrant business district. Other stretches exemplify the planning term "missing teeth" – intermittent vacant lots, faceless buildings, highway overpasses, and vast parking areas.

Columbia Road offers the opportunity to connect the city's people to its great natural, commercial, residential, and cultural resources. Options for improving Columbia Road range from simple transit improvements to a complete redesign of the two-mile corridor. Something in-between these two visions – filling in the development gaps, improving facades, reducing traffic – is a more likely scenario.

1. **Gateways.** Columbia Road begins at the intersection of Blue Hill Avenue and the beginning of Franklin Park. The entrances to Franklin Park and Zoo New England are invisible from the road, obscured by the multiple lanes of heavy traffic. The largest piece of Olmsted's Emerald Necklace, Franklin Park deserves a grand gateway, reflecting its historical and social significance in the city. Creation of a gateway at its other end – the JFK/UMass T station that provides access to the University of Massachusetts and the John F. Kennedy Library – would contribute to a better definition of the whole corridor.

2. **Road Design.** The start of Columbia Road at Blue Hill Avenue is a busy intersection with three lanes of traffic in each direction. Columbia Road is wide enough to accommodate a trolley, a bike path, or even a grassy median with large trees like the Commonwealth Avenue Mall. Narrowing the lanes would also slow traffic down and ease pedestrian use. Substituting bike lanes for turn lanes might also increase recreational use of the road.

3. **Public Transit.** The only public transit around Columbia Road is the No. 16 bus, but long-time residents remember when a streetcar that ran down the middle of the street, separated from the automotive traffic by a grassy median with large trees.

4. **Washington St. Intersection.** At the intersection with Washington Street, a fast food franchise occupies a full block with its drive-through window and huge parking lot. Even though the intersection of two main streets would be expected to generate heavy traffic, the parking lot is often empty. The development of alternative uses would allow the restaurant to flourish while improving the street "walls."

5. **Ceylon Playground.** One of only a few playgrounds in the area, the Ceylon Playground offers a beautiful pedestrian entrance for the adjacent Quincy E. Dickerman School. The slope of the park creates an attractive open space, one of only two between Franklin Park and the harbor. With no other playgrounds within almost a mile of Ceylon, there is an glaring need for more playground space in Dorchester and particularly around Columbia Road.

6. **Commuter Rail Overpass.** The Fairmount Line of the commuter rail crosses Columbia Road just before Quincy Street en route from South Station to Readville, stopping in Dorchester



at Upham's Corner, Morton Street, and Fairmount. Running infrequently, it provides infrequent service to a densely populated area, which needs a more regular and reliable public transit service.

7. **Architecture.** Along the stretch of road between Quincy Street and Upham's Corner, the large Victorian houses recall the day when the neighborhood was one of the most fashionable addresses in Boston.

8. **M&M Ribs.** The vacant lot on the corner of Columbia Road and Quincy Street is an example of individual entrepreneurship answering a community need. The BBQ ribs grill truck is a favorite eatery and gathering spot on a street with few restaurants, and has been the basis for the rejection of development plans for the lot.

9. **Upham's Corner.** At the intersection of Dudley Street and Columbia Road lies Upham's Corner. This thriving commercial district boasts many historic buildings, a popular open-air market and one of the city's first Main Streets programs. Lack of good public transportation generates persistent traffic congestion. Although the commuter rail stops a few blocks away, it does not travel frequently enough to properly serve the area. A new transit stop, now under consideration for the Urban Ring, might reduce the congestion.

10. **The Strand Theater.** A beautiful historic building, the Strand Theatre is a local landmark and an anchor for the community, hosting public speakers, musical performances, and religious and school events. It also provides a place to gather for community meetings and events, such as the Upham's Corner Main Streets program kickoff and the holiday tree lighting.

11. **Dorchester North Burial Ground.** A significant historical site, the Dorchester North Burial Ground is tucked away at the corner of Stoughton Street and Columbia Road at Upham's Corner. There is little signage announcing the cemetery, directing people to parking or even to the front gate. The tall wrought-iron fence that encloses the cemetery is always locked, preventing any recreational or educational use of the cemetery.

12. **Edward Everett Square.** Named for the nineteenth century statesman Edward Everett, the square dates to the colonial era. Formerly known as Five Corners, the history of the square is displayed by the Blake House, built in 1677. The Square today is more like a traffic circle than a city square. It is home to a few drive-through eating franchises and has little pedestrian traffic -- discouraged by high speed traffic and poor street crossings. Residents hope to redesign the area to express its historic significance. The Everett Square Project Committee received a grant to do a study of the square and implement part of its plan. One idea is the creation of a Dorchester Historic Trail.

13. **Southeast Expressway Overpass.** Pedestrian safety also poses a challenge at the Southeast Expressway overpass, where the lack of traffic signals at the on and off ramps of the expressway pose a serious threat to pedestrians trying to walk to Columbia Point.

14. **The JFK/UMass Red Line "T" Station.**

15. **The Kosciuszko Traffic Circle.** Columbia Road meets up with Morrissey Boulevard, Mt. Vernon Street and William J. Day Boulevard at a traffic circle just past the Red Line "T"





Station. Even though it is the only pedestrian access to Columbia Point, the circle has no safe pedestrian path.

**16. The Bayside Expo Center.** An abundance of parking lots defines the Bayside Exposition Center at the entrance to Columbia Point.

**17. Columbus Park.**

**18. Carson Beach.** With new sand and a renovated bath house, Carson Beach is a delightful public space, taking full advantage of the newly-clean Boston Harbor.

**19. The Harborwalk.** Along the water's edge from Carson Beach around all of Columbia Point is the most recent piece of the Harborwalk – a project providing public access along the entire Boston Harbor. The paved path is excellent for bicycles, in-line skates, or just walking.

**20. Harbor Point Housing Development.** Recently rebuilt, Harbor Point now has mixed-income housing with plenty of open space and a wonderful view of the harbor.

**21. John F. Kennedy Library and Museum.** Designed by I.M. Pei and Partners, the striking black and white museum and library was dedicated in 1979 to support the study of Kennedy's life and career as well as encourage greater appreciation for America's political heritage.

**22. University of Massachusetts campus/building/hideous monstrosity.** Established in 1964, the University of Massachusetts at Boston is known as one of the leaders in urban universities. As part of its mission, the University provides a number of services to Boston residents of all ages, including computer services, work with the local high schools, and offering many classes for community members.

**23. The Massachusetts Archives and Commonwealth Museum.** Holding records of state entities that document or dictate the purpose of those entities, the state archives are routinely used by state agencies in their normal functioning, private citizens to document their rights and researchers. The museum has permanent and temporary exhibitions on the physical and social history of Massachusetts, as well as publications, databases and outreach programs.

**24. Pump Station.** A historic building with beautiful Victorian details, the former pump station is now being considered for purchase and redevelopment by the University of Massachusetts.



## Massachusetts Community Preservation Act

Both chambers of the Massachusetts State Legislature approved bills in 1999 to create a new funding mechanism for projects that involve housing, open space acquisition, and preservation.

The Community Preservation Act would allow local governments to pass a local tax to pay for projects in any of the three areas. The law would allow local city councils or town meetings to adopt the levies and seek voter approval in a referendum. More than 50 stakeholder organizations have endorsed the measure. More than 70 communities in Massachusetts have endorsed such a tax but have experienced difficulty getting state approval.

The chambers differed in their strategies for funding. The Senate version offers two possible funding sources: an additional excise tax of up to 1 percent on the deed excise tax or a surcharge of up to 3 percent on the real property tax levy. The House version allows localities to levy only the real estate surcharge of up to 3 percent, but also provides matching funds worth 25 percent of the total revenues raised.

The CPA has been a priority of the housing, preservation, and open space communities for more than two years. The goal of the legislation is to give municipalities new options to develop "whole" communities. Each municipality would have the option to use the money for one, two, or all three of the programs.

The CPA represents a growing consensus on the need to develop strategies to combat sprawl in urban areas. By allowing communities to buy land, the act provides a mechanism to combat the development of farmland and other spaces that are critical to the environment and character of a community. The preservation provision provides mechanisms for communities to redevelop existing buildings and districts and lessen the pressure for outward expansion.

Sprawl has been a hot topic of discussion in Massachusetts for years. In 1998, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency convened a major conference in Boston to share strategies for combating unchecked growth.

At that conference, experts reported between 1972 and 1996, when the state's population increased only 6 percent, the amount of developed land increased by ten times that rate. According to the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, the last 40 years have seen more land development than the previous 330 years since the settlement of Plymouth Rock.

CPA would not offer a comprehensive anti-sprawl strategy. Other strategies – involving zoning, tax codes, public transit, housing codes – are also essential variables in the anti-sprawl equation. But the CPA could give communities like Boston and its suburbs a good vehicle to talk about what overall strategies would be worthwhile pursuing to foster community development that integrates rather than separates people and activities.



## **Emerald Necklace improvements**

*(this sidebar is a set of annotated maps of the Emerald Necklace – with information about the specific places that need to be “fixed” in the next generation. It should be liberally illustrated. It probably should go four pages. It might be good to start with a map of the whole necklace, and then break out into maps and pictures of the smaller pieces NOTE: Some of these sections might seem too long, but they would be broken up with the graphic materials. You might consider them to be extended captions for the graphics.)*

Boston's Emerald Necklace is one of the world's great citywide park systems. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, the Emerald Necklace incorporates six different parks and open spaces. To succeed, the Emerald Necklace must connect these spaces seamlessly.

Here is a look at the places that require improvements in the next generation:

**Charlesgate and Bowker Overpass.** Under Olmsted's design, the Muddy River flowed uninterrupted into the Charles River. People should be able to walk along the Muddy River and the parkland along the river, eventually reaching the Charles River and Esplanade. Storrow Drive and the Massachusetts Turnpike pose two daunting obstacles to the walk to the Charles.

Under the current configuration, the Muddy River runs right into the Mass Pike at Ipswich Street. Access to the other side of the Pike comes by walking across the Bowker Overpass. Walking on the Overpass can feel dangerous because of high-speed automobile traffic and narrow sidewalks. On the north side of the Overpass, park space straddles Commonwealth Avenue and stretches to Storrow Drive. Those parks have suffered from darkness, poor pedestrian access, and a design that offers little for residents or passersby. The parks' connection to the Esplanade is cut off by Storrow Drive.

The cleanup of the Muddy River is critical to the success of this area. Ipswich Street, a vital connection between Boylston Street and Lansdowne Street, could be dramatically improved with minimal landscaping and sidewalk improvements.

A redesign of the Bowker Overpass is critical to the success of the area. With the current overpass facing major structural flaws, a new overpass can be built that not only handles auto traffic but also provides better pedestrian and bicycle access and allows more light to get to the Charlesgate parks. The redesign of the Charlesgate underpass parks offers numerous possibilities. The major goals of such a redesign should be to shield noise from the Mass Pike, make park space lighter, enhance the river as a park attraction, and create well-defined activity areas.

Pedestrian connections to the Charles River Esplanade might be possible with a pedestrian bridge or stop signal. Pedestrian bridges often create as many problems as they solve, but a small bridge might be appropriate for this area.

**The Back Bay Fens.** The Back Bay Fens has benefited from important enhancements in recent years, such as the construction of new steps from Boylston Street, redesign of the Mother Rest, and addition of lighting near the Victory Gardens. Many improvements remain. The Evans Way, Forsythe Street, and Agassiz Street paths do not provide adequate access to the park. Agassiz Way – a major connector from the east and west parts of the Fenway – requires better lighting. Existing street and park lamps mar the area's appearance because of a variety of styles.

The greatest problem is that the Back Bay Fens is cut off from its greatest asset, the Muddy River, because of the growth of invasive reeds called fragmites. In addition to blocking views of the river, buildup of sedimentation in the river also creates a constant danger of flooding with every major storm. Mayor Menino has secured \$43 million in funds from the state for a cleanup



of the river. The Parks Department has also secured federal funding for a new bicycle path from the Back Bay Fens to Huntington Avenue along Westland Avenue.

The section of the Back Bay Fens near Boylston Street and Park Drive is underused because of intimidating traffic patterns. Strengthening of sidewalks and improved landscaping could bring this piece a vital part of the Emerald Necklace.

**The former "missing piece."** The owners of the new Landmark Center have ceded ownership of the former Sears parking lot to the City. The area has become a lawn with paths for the area's many walkers. Development of a more sophisticated design awaits a community process. Many Muddy River advocates call for the river to be "daylighted," that is, restored as an open river from its current position underground in culverts. Traffic redesign is crucial to connecting the "missing piece" with Riverway.

**The Riverway and Jamaica Way.** Originally conceived as an old-fashioned parkway, suitable for leisurely excursions into the outdoors, this roadway has become a major automobile carrier connecting Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Longwood, and the Fenway. Car traffic is intimidating to pedestrians and bicyclists and cuts Bostonians off from one of their greatest treasures. The parks along the Muddy River also require restoration, with redesign of paths and placement of benches and other appropriate street furniture. More and better crosswalks are essential for the whole stretch of the Riverway and Jamaica Way.

**Arborway.** A critical connector between Jamaica Pond and the Arnold Arboretum, the Arborway consists of a major road and a "service" road – and traffic is fast on both. Because the service road is used as a major artery, pedestrians and bicyclists lack safe passage from one piece of the Emerald Necklace to another. If automobile traffic is controlled, the service roads could provide pleasant and safe connections for the area. The Metropolitan District Commission, which has jurisdiction over the road, is working with community groups on a comprehensive transportation plan to improve safety and access.

**Franklin Park access.** Access to the city's largest park is marred by automobile traffic and inadequate design on the park's edges. Signage at nearby Forest Hills and Green Street transit stations is inadequate. More important, sidewalks are patchy to the park on all sides. Circuit Drive, which runs through the middle of the park, is dominated by automobiles and in places offers no safe place to walk. The edges of the park are often intimidating for passersby and infrequent park users. The two entrances requiring a major design overhaul are at Blue Hill Avenue and Morton Circle. Other entrances need enhancement to draw neighbors.

**Columbia Road.** Often called the "unfinished" piece of the Emerald Necklace, Columbia Road once flourished as a trolley corridor with beautiful Victorians, three-deckers, and apartment buildings. But Columbia Road has lost its original character with the widening of the street for automobile traffic. To reclaim this corridor as a critical element of the Emerald Necklace, the city might develop a special trolley service along a new landscaped street. By connecting Carson Beach with Franklin Park and Forest Hills, an Aqua Line could spur major economic investments and make Franklin Park and the waterfront major attractions for residents and visitors alike.





## Events and festivals

Each year, hundreds of festivals and other public events take place in Boston. Three of the city's parks – the Charles River Esplanade, Boston Common, and Franklin Park – bear a disproportionate share of these activities.

There are two major problems with the excessive use of these parks. First, there is a danger that these parks will be "loved to death" – that maintenance will be difficult because of the stampede of bodies and the lack of resources for restoring park spaces after events. Second, excessive use of parks places an undue burden on neighborhoods and regular users of the parks.

Parks Commissioner Justine Liff has called for the city or state to construct a fairgrounds to host major festivals and events in the city. The fairgrounds would not only take the burden off other parks and reduce maintenance costs, but would also serve as venues for attracting major events to the city.

Here are some of the major events at Boston's major parks:

**Franklin Park:** Boston Kite Festival (golf course), Puerto Rico Festival (playstead), Kiddie Carribean Festival (White Stadium), Carribean Festival, Roxbury Pride Day.

**City Hall Plaza:** Scooper Bowl, Festival Hispania, Cape Verdean Festival, Central American Festival, Greek Independence Day, Patriot's Day Flag Raising, Independence Day, Columbus Day.

**Boston Common:** MIX Festival, Project Bread Walk for Hunger, Gay Pride Day, *HempFest*

**Charles River Esplanade:**

Other parks also host major events. Roach Park hosts the Louisa Festival, Ramsey Park the Dominican Festival, Cassidy Park the Brian Connors Fun Run.

The Parks Department has declared a moratorium on festivals in parks because of the damage to grass and facilities in the parks. Each new festival goes through a strict screening process.



## Boston Harbor Islands

With the passage of Congressional legislation in 1996, Boston became the site of a major national park that could serve to connect residents and visitors to an extraordinary collection of natural and historic sites and provide an impetus to water-based transit and economic development.

The Boston Harbor Islands, which total some 1,600 acres of land over an area of 50 square miles and 30 islands and peninsulas, will be the site of a national park that incorporates 16 islands.

Five "hub" islands – George's, Spectacle, Paddock's, Long, and Deer – could be developed as recreational and environmental parks. In the near term, George's, Spectacle, and Paddock's Islands will serve as the primary sites for recreation. These islands will include gateways with visitor centers, restaurants or food concessions, boat rentals, and venues for concerts, educational presentations, and festivals.

Already more than 100 buildings and other structures are located on the islands. These structures tell a story about the development of not only Boston but also North America. Cottages, forts, military buildings, sea walls, lighthouses, and bunkers all tell the story of civilization from Indian times to the early twentieth century. Many of these buildings will be singled out for special rehabilitation and access for visitors.

Plans to display the culture of Native Americans are under development as well. Some 21 islands are listed with the National Register of Historic Places because of their rich archaeological collections from the centuries of Indian settlements on the islands.

In addition to programmed recreational opportunities, the islands will also offer enhanced access for hiking, camping, and other enjoyment of the natural environment.

Critical to the national park's success will be a system of water transit. Visitors will be able to get to the islands from East Boston, Charlestown, the North End, South Boston, and Dorchester, as well as the nearby towns on the North and South Shores. Private boat operators will be contracted to provide service to the islands. Levels of service will depend on the demand demonstrated for the different activities on the hub and other islands.

At all islands of the national park, a comprehensive system of orientation – kiosks, exhibits, maps, interpretive media – will guide visitors to attractions. All island development will follow principles of sustainable and accessible design. Each island open to the public will be required to provide staffing and planning for resource protection, interpretation, maintenance, and administration.

Under the plans, 16 islands are not expected to undergo any substantial development as resources for visitors.



## Harborwalk

*<Please note that this sidebar is unfinished will be updated with information from the BRA's current Harborwalk inventory project.>*

Over the past 20 years, piece by piece, the City, the State, and individual property owners have been working to build a continuous walkway along the water's edge. When complete, "Harborwalk" will extend 43 miles along Boston Harbor. Running in and out of wharves, along beaches, across bridges, and through existing parks, Harborwalk will take a variety of forms, but all segments will allow people to enjoy the experience of being at the harbor.

The idea of Harborwalk is simple: to provide a number of connected places along the edge of Boston Harbor where people can take in the sights, sounds, and activities of the busy urban harbor. Boston Inner Harbor is one of Boston's largest open spaces, and it should be easily accessible to people from all of the neighborhoods.

At this point, only approximately half of the future Harborwalk is accessible. Many public and private landowners have not yet complied with the Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act – a law that has been on the books since 1866 – that protects the public's right to access the areas around buildings or other structures built below the historic high-water mark.

### ***Call outs to go on the map:***

1. Logan Airport: 7 miles of waterfront around the airports periphery is inaccessible.
2. Neponset Greenway: The greenway begins in this area, a gentle transition from Harborwalk to the linear park along the river's edge.
3. T Equipment Corporation's and Schlager Auto Body's properties are inaccessible.
4. Port Norfolk: Estuary Condominiums' developer never constructed the public riverside walkway approved in an environmental permit through the Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (the precursor to today's Department of Environmental Protection).
5. Rainbow Park boat launch <located near the end of Victory Road on Port Norfolk>: Public boat launch
6. Southeast Epressway: This segment is inaccessible because of the highway's location and the location of several businesses along the shore.
7. Boston Gas' 12-million gallon gas tank, painted in rainbow stripes by Sister Corita Kent.
8. Columbia Point: U. Mass., the J.F.K. Library, and Harbor Point are connected by a seamless path with groups of benches, shelters, and historical markers along the way.
9. Carson Beach and recently restored Carson Beach Bathhouse
10. Three private yacht clubs
11. L-Street Bathhouse
12. Castle Island
13. Boston Marine Industrial Park: the industrial park houses several water-dependent businesses
14. South Boston Waterfront: Harborwalk will be built along all future developments in the South Boston Waterfront
15. Federal Courthouse: The design of the Federal Courthouse's waterfront park and Harborwalk segment set high standards for nearby developments.
16. Old Northern Avenue Bridge: Current plans call for the removal of the bridge and replacement of the pedestrian connection by a private development. Historic preservationists



- have been actively looking to save the bridge, but the City has denied the structure landmark status.
17. Rows Wharf: Accessible and well designed, Rows Wharf provides intimate walkways among docked boats, small public spaces, and outdoor cafes.
  18. Harbor Towers: This residential development is inaccessible to the public
  19. Aquarium: The Aquarium is encircled by a public walkway – it is narrow, but it is open to the public
  20. A new boardwalk: A new wooden boardwalk connects the lively and inviting granite plaza at the end of Long Wharf with the soon-to-be redesigned Christopher Columbus Park.
  21. North End residential developments: Several of the residential developments along the North End's wharves are inaccessible. However, \_\_\_\_\_ has recently constructed a park with viewing stations, landscaping, and benches.
  22. Battery Wharf: <What's the deal here?>
  23. Coast Guard: <What's the deal here?>
  24. Puopolo Playground: Bocce courts and playing fields enliven this greenspace on the harbor's edge.
  25. Charlestown Bridge: Soon to be lit in the evenings, this industrial gem provides a strong pedestrian connection between the North End and City Square.
  26. Charles River Locks and Paul Revere Park: The locks are completely accessible – except when the operators open the gates to allow boats through. The adjacent, newly-completed Paul Revere Park has good access, a play ground, and will have a spectacular view of the forthcoming cable-stay bridge along Interstate 93's Charles River crossing.
  27. Charlestown Navy Yard: The around the U.S.S. Constitution and other Freedom Trail attractions is all open and accessible – but still has the feel of an old military base. East of the tourist attractions, is a ferry terminal with service to Downtown Boston and a number of piers and wharves with residential and office development. The Harborwalk in this area is a well-maintained wooden boardwalk set in granite.
  28. The former Dewey Beach
  29. Constellation Wharf
  30. Schrafft's building
  31. Public boat launch at the Schrafft's
  32. Boston Conservation Commission's land in East Boston along Chelsea Creek: Still fenced off?
  33. Pier at Maverick Square: Former site of MBTA ferry terminal, now what?
  34. Industrial activity between Maverick Square and Piers Park. Inaccessible.
  35. Piers Park: After years of clashing, Massport and neighborhood residents collaborated to build the spectacular Piers Park. With it's fully accessible sail boat pier, brick walkways, and unmatched views of the Downtown skyline, Piers Park is one of the finest places along the entire length of Harborwalk. The park will soon be expanded to include an area of playing fields.
  36. Massport land? Or is it a private Marina?
  37. Little park and playground start the Harborwalk again at the end of Jeffries Point. From there, the path is continuous, if short, along Massport's office property out to the recently-constructed Hyatt Hotel.
  38. Cashman Equipment: Inaccessible
  39. Blue Line train yard and Rev-Lyn Contracting Co. also inaccessible
  40. Belle Isle Salt Marsh: Here, a thirty-foot tall observation tower offers views of the entire inner harbor, the islands, and even the Blue Hills.









## Heart of the City

A cluster of parks and cemeteries form a large swath of green in the heart of Boston. The anchors of the area are the Arnold Arboretum and Franklin Park, the last two pieces of the Emerald Necklace – the park system Frederick Law Olmsted designed for Boston. They are complimented by the beautifully landscaped Forest Hills Cemetery and a few smaller cemeteries and will be joined by a new nature center. Although they face a few challenges, such as inadequate transportation, parking and signage, they provide an invaluable resource for the city.

1. **Franklin Park:** Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as part of his Emerald Necklace, Franklin Park's 527 acres now include a golf course, a zoo, places to picnic, and 4.5 miles of bike paths and running trails. The park hosts a number of events throughout the year, including the Puerto Rican Festival and national cross-country races. The Boston Parks Department is in the process refurbishing it as a part of the Emerald Necklace Master Plan.

Transportation is one of the main challenges to the park and surrounding community. Although car is currently the best way to access the park, there is little parking in and around the park; visitors' cars constantly crowd neighborhood streets. The zoo, which attracts more than 350,000 visitors every year, the golf course, and the Boston Public Schools' White Stadium are the three greatest attractions in the park and draw the most cars. The parking needs of these three places need to be addressed in any parking or transit plan for the area. Destroying park land to create parking lots has been the only way to create more parking inside the park, such as the two gravel lots in across from the golf course in between the entrance to the running course and the zoo. This cannot remain the solution for the parking problem. Building more parking in the residential neighborhoods that surround the park is not a suitable alternative either. The best solution is to reduce the number of cars that come to the park – without reducing the number of people who enjoy the park – by improving other forms of transportation. Franklin Park is near Forest Hills Station, but there is no good pedestrian route to it. There is also a bus that stops at the main entrance to the park, near the zoo. Public transportation is still limited to outside the park; there is no way to get around within the park without a car or a bike. Biking to the park is not as simple as it should be. The bike paths that run along the Emerald Necklace and the Southwest Corridor Park into the area are not well connected to Franklin Park.

Controlling auto traffic within the park is also a challenge. Circuit Drive, a large road that runs through the middle of the park, carries a lot of through traffic as well as park visitors. The road divides the park and disturbs the peaceful atmosphere that would otherwise exist; residents and park users want the road to be closed to traffic.

2. **The Arnold Arboretum.** Managed by Harvard University, the Arnold Arboretum is an educational garden, with 265 acres of trees, flowers and shrubbery. As part of its educational mission, the Arboretum sponsors educational programs for adults and school group throughout the year. The arboretum is open to the public for walking, jogging or biking. The main challenge to the arboretum is also transportation. Like Franklin Park, there is limited parking at the arboretum. The walk from Forest Hills station is not well-articulated and in places, even dangerous. The small leaves embedded in the sidewalk, meant to lead the way, are not large enough or frequent enough to succeed as a guide. Better signs and maps of the area, marked with the locations of the parks and other places of interests, would greatly



improve the area. Signage is also an issue for the entire city. The city must create better street signs and more maps enhance the city's accessibility.

3. **Forest Hills Cemetery.** Established in 1848, the Forest Hills cemetery is a private 275 acre cemetery run by the Forest Hills Educational Trust. The cemetery preceded Olmsted's Emerald Necklace and may have inspired its design. Although it is one of the most beautiful sites in the city, Forest Hills Cemetery is underutilized because of its location south of the traditional tourist map boundaries and because of poor pedestrian accessibility. The closest entrance from the Forest Hills Station is a little west of the main entrance, almost completely hidden at the end of a residential street. Lack of signage is again a problem. The main entrance is recessed from Morton Street on a small side street, a far walk from the Forest Hills Station. There are no sidewalks on Morton Street or on the smaller streets that run to the main entrance. There are no traffic signals or crosswalks to help pedestrians cross Morton Street. This discourages pedestrian or bicycle use of these parks, augmenting area traffic and parking problems. The same lack of sidewalks and traffic signals hinders use of the rest of the area parks as well.
4. **Boston Nature Center.** On the site of the former Boston State Hospital, the new Boston Nature Center and Wildlife Sanctuary of the Massachusetts Audubon Society will add to the green character of the area. The 66-acre park will be the site for the on-going educational programs that the Massachusetts Audubon Society has been running for more than 20 years. The community gardens, which have been there for 30 years, will remain and the center will create a number of trails to run through the wildlife sanctuary. The conservation of the land as park space is a victory for Boston. Park land in Boston has been decreasing every year for the last xx years. When the city needs land for schools or hospitals, it sometimes takes park land which is far less expensive than buying land at current Boston land prices. Franklin Park has struggled with this issue, it has already lost land to the Shattuck Hospital and shelter. Community access to the center is also a challenge. The Center is not near to any rail stations, nor is there good pedestrian access from Forest Hills. The lack of sidewalk on Morton Street, which also borders the Nature Center, will hinder pedestrian access to the center. *(I don't know where the main entrance will be or if there will be an entrance there at all)*
5. **Forest Hills T Station.** Transportation is one of the important issues of the Heart of the City, making the Forest Hills Station a focal point of development in the area. Forest Hills is already an important regional transit node because many people drive to it from further south to commute into the city by subway. Logic might say that attracting many additional people into the area would help local retail establishments, but most people go from car to subway without stopping or entering the community. The community is looking to find a way to capitalize on the area's potential as a commercial center, as well as improve the aesthetics of the area.

The primary way that outside commuters impact the neighborhood is through an increase in the demand for parking. The area around the station is dominated by parking lots, exacerbated by the MBTA yard. But all of these lots are filled in the early morning by commuters, leaving no spaces with residents or potential users of the commercial area. There is no place to park and run into a store for a quick errand. The commercial area is also limited in the services it provides. There is very little diversity of products, specifically, there is no place to get produce, are no places serving the large youth community that comes through the area everyday from three area schools.



An crucial part of attracting more people to stop in Forest Hills is the appearance and accessibility of the area. Enhanced streetscape and signage are needed throughout the area. The creation of a commercial district would benefit the area by providing some resources for much-needed façade improvements, deterring crime, possibly with the aid of a new police sub-station, similar to Downtown Crossing. Pedestrian accessibility around the station is also a challenge. Washington Street, Hyde Park Avenue and the streets that connect them (e.g., New Washington Street) are wide enough to provide convenient automobile access to the area, but foster an intimidating atmosphere for pedestrians. Street crossing issues also need to be addressed at the Monsignor Casey Overpass, Morton Street rotary, New Washington Street and the connection between South Street and the T station.

In addition to better street signage, maps and directions to Franklin Park, the Arnold Arboretum, Forest Hills Cemetery and the new Nature Center are essential to recreating the connections between these places. The distance between the T station and any of these destinations is not physically great, but the psychological distance is daunting because there is nothing interesting along the way to help pull you along. As described earlier in the section on Charm Bracelets, distances can feel shorter if there are interesting things along the way to break it up. Improving the commercial and recreational activities in the area will contribute to these ideas.

6. **Neighborhood Economic Development.** An increase in visitors to the parks would also support more economic development in the area – and vice versa. Possible retail projects that might capture park visitors include a place to rent bicycles and helmets, an ice cream shop, stores that sell sandwiches or other picnic ingredients and restaurants. But catering to park visitors is only part of the solution. The needs of the community members are not being met by the current retail establishments. The area could use a bank, a video store, convenience stores, and grocery and produce outlets. The business districts along Washington and South Street are critical to the activity in the area. The major goals should be to develop a more diverse retail mix and create a more attractive environment for businesses and visitors alike. Façade improvements, perhaps with the help of city grants, would make the area more attractive to potential customers as well as new businesses. Building a thriving commercial center and city destination would also increase awareness and use of the parks.

Building a parking facility outside the park with strong pedestrian, bike and trolley connections to specific attractions within the park might relieve some of the parking pressures while generating some revenue for the community. Food vendors inside the Franklin Park also would be a nice amenity for park users. Concerts and theater productions like the other special events already taking place at Franklin Park would expand the uses of the park and bring more people to any stores or restaurants in the area.

7. **Urban Design.** The gateway into the Heart of the City should reflect the character of the area. The main entrance to Franklin Park from Columbia Road gives no indication that traffic (automotive or pedestrian) is going to move into one of the greatest urban parks. As well as being beautiful, these gateways need to clearly express the green character of the area. They should give a view into the park, inviting, but not transparent, and be easy for the community to take care of. The Arborway Yard of the Green Line also needs to be redesigned to be less of an eyesore.





## Muddy River

The Muddy River, which feeds into the Charles River, poses one of the most urgent challenges of Boston's five rivers. Ever since the flood of 1996, institutions in the Fenway and environmentalists have argued for a thorough dredging and cleanup of the Muddy. More than three decades of silt have gathered in the river's bottom, and the culverting of many river stretches and the presence of the ubiquitous reeds in the Fenway impede the flushing and water flow of the river.

Like the Back Bay Fens, the Muddy River was fashioned by Frederick Law Olmsted as a solution to the water quality and flooding problems in Boston tidal flats. By dredging the channels of the existing Muddy River and creating retention basins to prevent flooding and a tidal gate at the mouth of river to prevent water stagnation, the new Riverway and Fens were created. Olmsted wanted a salt-water marsh with plants that could survive in salt and brackish water and with changing water levels. The damming of the Charles River in 1910 transformed the river, converting it from a salt to a fresh water system. The result was important changes in vegetation and drainage that produced damaging buildup and reduced water flow. The tidal flows had served to flush out the river of sediments and pollution. The low slope of the riverbeds and the high rate of sediment introduction into the river are also factors in the low water flow. The Muddy River is also polluted by salt, petroleum products, animal and other wastes from overtaxed combined sewer overflows, illegal sewage connections and run-off from roads and parks. The high sediment buildup has contributed to the flooding and exacerbating the problem with the high levels of pollutants in the flooding waters.

The Emerald Necklace Environmental Improvements Master Plan of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department proposes comprehensive solutions to the Muddy River's problems of pollution and flooding. Dredging the river is the principal improvement, but adoption of "Best Management Practices," such as increased catch basin maintenance, street sweeping, installation and maintenance of modified major drainage outflows with sediment weirs, sediment traps/particle separators and oil/water separators are also critical to preserving the improvements in the Muddy River.

Re-vegetation is also a key part in the restoration plans. Re-planting Olmsted's plants and wetlands will help to stabilize the riverbanks. The wetlands provide outlets for water during heavy rains, helping with flood control and storm damage prevention. The flat topography and plant life and soils associated with bordering wetlands contribute to the protection of water quality by removing or detaining sediments, nutrients and toxicants (*toxins?*). Underwater land in a marsh system helps to contain water during heavy flows, and contains organic sediments that detain or remove nutrients or toxicants from the water.

"Visions of the Muddy River developed in Boston 400 and other community-based planning efforts call for the river to offer a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities – and transform its neighborhoods into vital "blue" communities."

---



## **Mystic River and Chelsea Creek**

The two most polluted waterways are the Mystic River and Chelsea Creek, acting as the northern borders of Boston, by Charlestown and East Boston, respectively. The industrial activities along these waterways has sustained extensive ground and groundwater contamination, as well as serious pollution of the rivers themselves. The existence of nearby land uses such as Logan Airport, car rental businesses, and industrial activities makes the cleanup and redevelopment challenges an ambitious and expensive proposition. Along the Chelsea River, 507 disposal sites, as well as storm water runoff, combined sewer overflows, shipping and industrial wastewater and cooling water, create a toxic corridor that puts the area decades from any kind of recreational, residential, or clean industry development. Still, a number of opportunities are available along these northernmost rivers. The Hess Corporation, MBTA, and Condor Street sites in East Boston offer the potential for large-scale natural regeneration.

The Mystic River was defined by the shipbuilding industry from the early 1800s until after World War II, when as many as 50,000 workers found employment in maritime industries. Since its closing in 1972, the Navy yard has been redeveloped for residential, commercial, tourist, and some industrial and maritime activities. The centerpiece of the Mystic River shipping activity is the Moran Terminal, New England's original major container port which still operates almost at full capacity. The Charlestown Port Area is restricted to maritime or water-related uses. The industries along the Mystic River are based largely on dry bulk cargoes (usually high volume, low value commodities). Major imports are scrap metals, gypsum and cement, and road salt. Port-related activities include shipping, warehousing, trucking, distribution, and manufacturing.



## Neponset River

The Neponset River offers the opportunity of a "green and blue" renaissance in the next generation. As a result of an MDC master plan and active community efforts, the lower Neponset, which runs the mouth of the river to Mattapan Square, has experienced a revival in recent years. Redesign of the Ryan Playground and Kennedy Playground provide two access points for canoe launches, as well as the potential for exciting lookouts onto the river. Development of a hiking trail, improved lookouts over the river, and better design and materials for the landside spaces has the potential to give the whole area a "blue" identity. Public and nonprofit entities are aggressively seeking to acquire new properties to extend the span of open spaces; sites under consideration include the T. Equipment and Schlager building near Granite Avenue. Also underway is a study to determine the advisability of removing two dams, which would increase the water flow and foster a more sea-like environment. Other issues, ranging from brownfield cleanup to the redevelopment of the old Baker Chocolate Factory, pose longterm challenges with important implications for the revival of the whole area.

1. **Paul's Bridge.** Connecting Milton and Readville, Paul's Bridge carries the Neponset Valley Parkway across the Neponset River. First built in the early 1700s, Paul's Bridge was rebuilt in 1759 and 1802. It was declared a historical landmark in 1972. An excellent picnicking spot, the bridge lies at the beginning of the Truman Parkway, which offers natural areas with a bike path, tennis and basketball courts, and the Martini Shell. Just east of the bridge are the Kennedy Brook and the Balster Brook.
2. **Camp Meigs.** Established in 1861, Camp Meigs was one of the first training camps in Massachusetts, training the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia to serve in the Civil War. This was the training ground for the 54th, the 55th infantry and the 5th cavalry – the African-American units that inspired the movie "Glory."
3. **Mother Brook.** Built in 1639, the Mother Brook was a man-made canal connecting the Charles and the Neponset rivers. It enters the Neponset River about 1.75 miles from Paul's Bridge.
4. **Tileston & Hollingsworth Dam.** About 2.5 miles after the entrance of the Mother Brook, the Neponset is interrupted by the Tileston & Hollingsworth Dam. The T&H is named for the eponymous paper mill founded in 1836 at that location. Several community groups are working with the Metropolitan District Commission to create portage for canoes around the dam.
5. **River Street.** Running along the Boston side of the Neponset River, River Street does not offer much visual or physical connection to the river. Because of the early mills and other businesses that relied on the water for power and waste disposal, the community historically has put the Neponset at its "back door." Efforts to open up the river to the community build on a national trend toward better public use of waterfronts.
6. **Sewer Pipe Crossing.** A sewer pipe runs through the Neponset around Massasoit Street between the T&H dam and Mattapan Square. This pipe is generally hidden under the water, but in dry weather, the water level falls below the pipe and it poses a serious impediment to recreational water uses.



7. **Mattapan Square.** The heart of the Mattapan Community, Mattapan Square is the center of business as well as a gateway into Boston from Milton via the Blue Hill Avenue Bridge. After the redevelopment of the river, the square could serve as a recreational crossroads that directs people to Mattapan's parks and playgrounds -- as well as Milton's Blue Hills Reservation.
8. **Columbia Tire Company.** The Boston Natural Areas Fund's purchase of the old Columbia Tire factory will extend the public recreation space along the river by the Kennedy Playground. Another vacant lot in Mattapan Square, at the old ABC Liquors site, also offers new opportunities for development of civic space.
9. **High Speed Rail.** Mattapan Square is the terminus of the historic Red Line "high-speed" rail line which runs from Ashmont to Mattapan Square. This trunk of the Red Line is served by a fleet of President's Conference Committee cars from the old Green Line -- the last PCC cars in regular service anywhere in the U.S. Originally built in 1945, the cars were rebuilt in 1983.
10. **Edgewater Park.** The idea behind Edgewater Park was to build a "town common" in Mattapan Square. Future plans call for landscaping on both sides of the river. The pedestrian bridge will join the picnic and gathering area and community gardens on the Boston side of the river with the grassy spaces and play area on the Milton side. A canoe launch is also planned for that area, which will include the parking lot of the former ABC liquor store.
11. **The Neponset River Trail.** Running 3 miles from Mattapan Square to Dorchester Bay, this new recreational trail will form links among the different parks and green spaces in the area, such as the Boston Harbor, Squantum Point, Wollaston Beach, the Blue Hills Reservation, Fowl Meadow, Mother Brook, Stony Brook Reservation, and the Charles River. The 10-foot-wide paved path is designed for walking, running or biking. Community groups have called for security measures to assure widest possible use.
12. **Ryan Playground.** Located about 2 miles after the T&H dam, Ryan Playground has play equipment, ball fields and a supervised wading pool. Nearby lies a walking path along the river and canoe launch. The river between Mattapan Square and Ryan Playground contains some whitewater.
13. **The Central Avenue Bridge.** The Star Market supermarket and parking lot occupies a large piece land adjacent to the river. This land has the potential for other recreational or development uses that enhance the riverway. A running circuit has been proposed for the area as well.
14. **Old Baker Chocolate Factory buildings.** The Pine Tree Brook enters the Neponset River just before the Lower Mills Dam. It carries drainage from the Blue Hills and the town of Milton. On the Boston side of the river are the buildings of the former Baker Chocolate Company factory, which moved to Delaware in 1964. One-hundred buildings have been redeveloped as condominiums; 200 more condo units are in the planning stages. Office and museum space is contemplated for Baker's old administrative office.





15. **Lower Mills Dam.** A significant drop in water level occurs at the Lower Mills Dam, where fresh water turns to salt and boaters are advised to exit the river. The dam also poses a barrier for herring and other fish trying to spawn upstream. The MDC is considering building a fish ladder to enable the herring to go further upstream to spawn. A State consortium is conducting a \$100,000 study to consider whether to breach both the Lower Mills Dam and the T&H dam. To improve pedestrian access to the river, the old railroad bridge between the Butler Street T station and Lower Mills will be replaced with a 12-to-14-foot-wide walking bridge. The Lower Mills commercial center lies at the foot of Dorchester Avenue, a main thoroughfare in Dorchester. The old Bay State Paper building offers great opportunities for adaptive reuse. The recent move of State Street Bank to the Flatley Building offers a better integration of business and the river.
16. **Milton Attractions.** Just after the Lower Mills Dam is the Adam's Street Bridge. On the Milton side of the river are the Milton Village MBTA stop, Milton Yacht Club, and Milton Town Landing canoe access. The bridge marks the beginning of Neponset River Estuary and Neponset River Reservation.
17. **Neponset River Reservation.** Just after the Milton Town Landing canoe Access, a small wooded knoll called Ventura Park lies opposite the launch. Just past Ventura is the Neponset River Estuary, home of the city's largest wild salt marshes. The Neponset River Reservation, created in 1899 by the MDC to preserve the marshland between the Lower Mills and the Granite Avenue Bridge, begins near the canoe launch. Plans call for the marshes and rest of reservation, now inaccessible to the public, to be part of a system of urban parks along the river.
18. **Granite Avenue Bridge Area.** The area on the Boston side of the river at the Granite Avenue Bridge offers another good place to launch a canoe but now has no formal ramp. This is the site of a combined sewer overflow pipe, used during heavy rains when the sewer running to the water treatment plant becomes too full. Water (rainwater and household sewage) is diverted to the overflow pipe, which empties directly into the river causing pollution problems. Plans call for replacement of the CSO pipe with the modern system of separate pipes for rainwater and household sewage. On the Quincy side of the river there are the remnants of an old stone wharf where the granite used to be brought from the Quincy Quarries to be shipped all over New England.
19. **Pope John Paul II Park.** After the Granite Avenue Bridge and Route 95 bridge are the Hallett Street dump and the old Dorchester drive-in movie theater. Acquired by the MDC in 1985, these parcels will form the Pope John Paul II Park with 72 acres. The park will be broken into three areas. The Riverside, the centerpiece of the park, will contain most of the park's facilities such as playing fields and courts. The Bend will be the least developed with meadows, a lookout and walking trails, and possibly a golf learning center. The Port will include a promenade, play spaces, and groves of trees. Main entrance to the park will be off Gallivan Boulevard near Neponset Circle. The park will offer a sheltered "drop-off and pick-up" area. The MBTA plans to provide bus service to the park.
20. **Dorchester Bay.** The Boston Gas tank, which lies 1.25 miles beyond the Red Line bridge, mark the end of the Neponset river and the beginning of the Dorchester Bay.



21. **Tenean Beach.** With improvements in the quality of water in the Boston Harbor, Tenean beach has become a popular swimming area. The beach also offers facilities for tennis and other games. Just north of Tenean Beach is Victory park, which now offers a boat launch
22. **Squantum Point Beach and Park.** An important stopover for migrating birds. Squantum Point Park will be 50 acres of a former U.S. Navy airfield. Primarily a wildlife sanctuary, the park will offer more active uses at its edges. One possibility is to establish ferry service to the Harbor Islands. Boat ramps, beach restoration, and fishing spots are also part of the plans.

**Signage and Orientation.** An important part of creating good civic spaces is signage. The MDC has developed a system of signs for street crossings, connections to other parks, directions to points of interest and general orientation along the Neponset River Reservation. In addition to signs, other devices can be used to orient people. For example, Mattapan Square residents plan to use a painted blue line to show the connection from Mattapan Square to the river.

**Water quality.** A number of public and community efforts have produced better water quality for users of the Neponset River. In addition to the Boston Harbor Clean-up and the restrictions on dumping and other polluting activities, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' Neponset River Watershed Initiative has begun to eliminate connection between sewers and storm drains, redesign catch basins to collect oil and particles before entering the river and educate the public about the use and safe disposal of pesticides, fertilizers, car oil and household cleaners. Although the water quality has improved considerably, more progress needs to be made before the Neponset is completely safe for swimming and fishing.

---



## Our Central Park

### An excerpt from the Seaport Public Realm Plan, January 1999.

The Seaport can play an important role in expanding Boston's public realm. As a collection of large parks and linear open space corridors, Olmsted's Emerald Necklace provides rich open space resource for the city. The Walk-to-the-Sea first extended this system from the Common through City Hall Plaza and Quincy Market to Long Wharf. The Seaport can play a critical role in developing a harborfront link from the Olmsted system, as well as connecting the city to the Harbor Islands. It can also play a significant role in the Harbor's revival by tying into and extending the existing public realm of Boston – its public streets, parks, open space corridors and pedestrian and bikeways – along an activated waterfront edge.

Two scale comparisons are worth looking at to illustrate the potential of the Harbor as an open space resource. The Emerald Necklace, a major component of Boston's public space system, reshaped over 2,000 acres of Boston when it was first built. Its frontage length is only 17.5 miles.

By comparison Boston's Inner Harbor is approximately 1,290 acres, water only, not including any area on land), about three miles long and contains almost 20 miles of frontage, if one were to walk its entire length. This comparison suggests that the Harbor is potentially a major component of Boston's public space system. It is remarkable to note that in size, length, width, and acreage, Central Park – at 895 acres and as the front yard for Manhattan's neighborhoods – fits within the outline of the Harbor.



## **The importance of exercise**

Parks and playing fields have always been a place where residents can meet and mingle or enjoy a little healthy competition. Today, health and exercise (and the correlation between the two) have come to the forefront of the national consciousness, due in part to the aging baby boom generation.

Throughout the nation health club memberships are on the rise and more people are taking to the outdoors for invigorating recreational activities. Running and bike paths have more traffic on them, and there is an increase in demand for playing fields for sports teams of all ages. Greater demand for playing fields and bike paths has left Boston with inadequate recreational space to serve its citizens. The city must take the initiative to provide more space for these activities that are an essential part to our physical and civic health.





## **Public opinion on parks funding**

Public opinion surveys and voter referendums have shown broad support for increasing public funding for parks acquisition and improvements.

A 1999 survey of Massachusetts residents who are likely to vote found strong support for a 1 percent property tax increase to protect open space, historic sites, and environmental initiatives for clean air and water. Some 59 percent of all respondents said they would support such a tax levy. Support was even greater in Boston – 69 percent.

Ninety percent of respondents statewide said that the Commonwealth should give localities the option to raise funds for open space, preservation, and the environment.

The telephone poll was conducted from January 27 to February 1, 1999 for the Trust for Public Land. A random sample was screened to focus on those who were most likely to vote. A total of 450 interviews were conducted. The margin for error was plus or minus 5 percent.

The Trust for Public Land has also tracked the success of voter initiatives to raise money for parks and open spaces and other investments in the environment. <info here>

*Recent referendum on land trusts?*



## **River overlay district**

All over Boston, community groups are working with state and local agencies and to create environmental cleanup and recreational opportunities for residents. But coordinating these different entities can be a daunting task. The creation of special overlay districts could help to foster better cooperation and pooling of resources.

The river overlay district would create special development rules and incentives within a specific distance from the river. The river overlay district recognizes that rivers present distinctive problems as well as opportunities for community development. Even more important, the overlay districts help to coordinate the work of public agencies, community groups, and nonprofit organizations.

An overlay district could be created with the cooperation of nearby cities and towns, or as a separate initiative of the City. The more expansive the overlay district – and the more clear its powers and planning tools – the greater the opportunity to coordinate a broad planning process.

The greatest challenge to river communities is environmental. Because of the industrial legacy of these communities, many rivers and river banks suffer from decades of pollution. Other environmental challenges include erosion of river banks, storm water runoff, overflow of sewage during heavy rainstorms, and limited water flow because of dam placement. These issues must be addressed as part of a comprehensive plan for rivers and watersheds.

Another major challenge of river areas is urban design. Waterfronts should be attractive and accessible for all residents and visitors. Landscaping and paths are needed to draw residents and others to the waterfront. Signs are needed to orient waterfront visitors and to provide interpretation of the area's natural and historic attractions. Park benches, play equipment, gardens, boardwalks, and canoe launches need to be built and maintained. Recreation spaces – canoe launches, play equipment, playing fields – should be located at strategic points along the river.

Transportation connections are critical to the life of the riverfront. Attractive, well-designed sidewalks and paths should draw residents, shoppers, and visitors. Bicycle paths and racks should link the riverfronts with nearby residential, historic, and commercial areas. Riverfronts should emphasize public transit and restrict parking. On-street parking and small lots with short-term meters should provide reasonable access for cars. But the riverfront's pedestrian character should not be compromised to accommodate cars.

Development is also critical to the vitality of the riverfronts. Some kinds of development that are unattractive and environmentally unsound – such as industrial, car-related, and some warehousing businesses – should be banned and phased out. Offices, restaurants and coffee shops, some government services could provide a steady flow of people to the area. Other positive uses include recreation, education, day care, museums, and the arts.

Residential development is important to generate year-round use and care of the waterfronts. Infill development engages neighbors in the use and maintenance of the river area and protect neighbors from traffic.

All of these efforts require strong coordination among state and local agencies. State agencies include the Metropolitan District Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. City agencies include the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the departments of Parks and Recreation, Neighborhood Development, Environment, Transportation, Inspectional Services, and Assessing.



## **Stony Brook Reservation**

Owned and managed by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), the Stony Brook Reservation is the second largest open space in Boston after Franklin Park. The 475 acres of forest, wetlands, and fields are crossed by ten to twelve miles of hiking and bicycle paths. The reservation contains fields and facilities for baseball, tennis, soccer, ice skating, and swimming – including the John F. Thompson Center, New England's first recreational facility designed specifically to accommodate physically challenged visitors.

The Stony Brook Reservation is underused because of uneven maintenance and access. Area bicyclists have noted that the reservation's trails are in need of significant repairs and regular maintenance. Because of its location, many visitors arrive by car and are disappointed to find the parking lots gated and locked. The park ranger's position was recently vacated and not filled by the MDC. Signage in and around the reservation does not exist, making it difficult to navigate to new visitors.

Stony Brook is an enormous opportunity for the residents of City of Boston. Connections to local and regional resources, such as Franklin Park and the Emerald Necklace, the Neponset River, and Blue Hills Reservation, make it a critical link in the chain of open space in the Greater Boston area.









# Building on the Lower Neponset River Master Plan

The Neponset River offers the opportunity of a "green and blue" renaissance in the next generation. Future opportunities, determined from the MDC master planning process are highlighted below.

**Pope John Paul II Park**  
After the Granite Avenue and Interstate 95 bridges are the Hallet Street Dump and the old Dorchester drive-in movie theater. Acquired by the MDC in 1985, these parcels will form the Pope John Paul II Park with 72 acres.

**Granite Avenue Bridge Area**  
The area on the Boston side of the river at the Granite Avenue Bridge offers another good place to launch a canoe but now has no formal ramp. This is the site of a CSO pipe used during heavy rains.

**Old Baker Chocolate Factory Buildings**  
The Pine Tree Brook enters the Neponset River just before the Lower Mills Dam. On the Boston side of the river are the buildings of the former Baker Chocolate Company factory, which moved to Delaware in 1964.

**The Neponset River Trail**  
Running 3 miles from Mattapan Square to Dorchester Bay, this new recreational trail will form links among the different parks and green spaces in the area. The 10-foot-wide path is designed for walking, running, or biking.

**Ryan Playground**  
Located about 2 miles after the T&H Dam, Ryan Playground has play equipment, ball fields, and a supervised wading pool. Nearby lies a walking path along the river and canoe launch.

**Edgewater Park**  
The idea behind Edgewater Park was to build a "town common" in Mattapan Square. Future plans call for landscaping on both sides of the river. The pedestrian bridge will join recreational facilities on the Boston and Milton sides.

**The Central Avenue Bridge**  
The Star Market supermarket and parking lot occupies a large piece of land adjacent to the river. This land has the potential for other recreational or development uses that enhance the riverway.

**Mattapan Square**  
The heart of the Mattapan Community, Mattapan Square is the center of business as well as a gateway into Boston from Milton via the Blue Hill Avenue Bridge. The square could serve as a recreational crossroads in the future.

**Columbia Tire Factory**  
The Boston Natural Area Fund's purchase of the old Columbia Tire Factory will extend the public recreation space along the river by the Kennedy Playground.

**High Speed Rail**  
Mattapan Square is the terminus of the historic Red Line "high-speed" rail line which runs from Ashmont to Mattapan Square. This trunk of the Red Line is served by a fleet of President's Conference Committee cars from the old Green Line.

**Neponset River Reservation**  
Just after the Milton Town Landing canoe access, is a small wooded knoll, Ventura Park. Just past Ventura is the Neponset River estuary, home of the city's largest salt marshes.

**Lower Mills Dam**  
A significant drop in water level occurs at the Lower Mills Dam, where freshwater turns to salt and boaters are advised to exit the river. The dam also poses a barrier for herring and other fish trying to spawn upstream.

**Milton Attractions**  
Just after the Lower Mills Dam is the Adams Street Bridge. On the Milton side of the river are the Milton Village MBTA stop, Milton Yacht Club, and Milton Town Landing canoe access.





# Neponset River: Mattapan Square to Readville

The Neponset River forms the southern boundary of the City of Boston.  
For Boston 400 we are making a special map of the watershed.  
This is the map.











# Charles River Basin







# Upper Charles River Basin



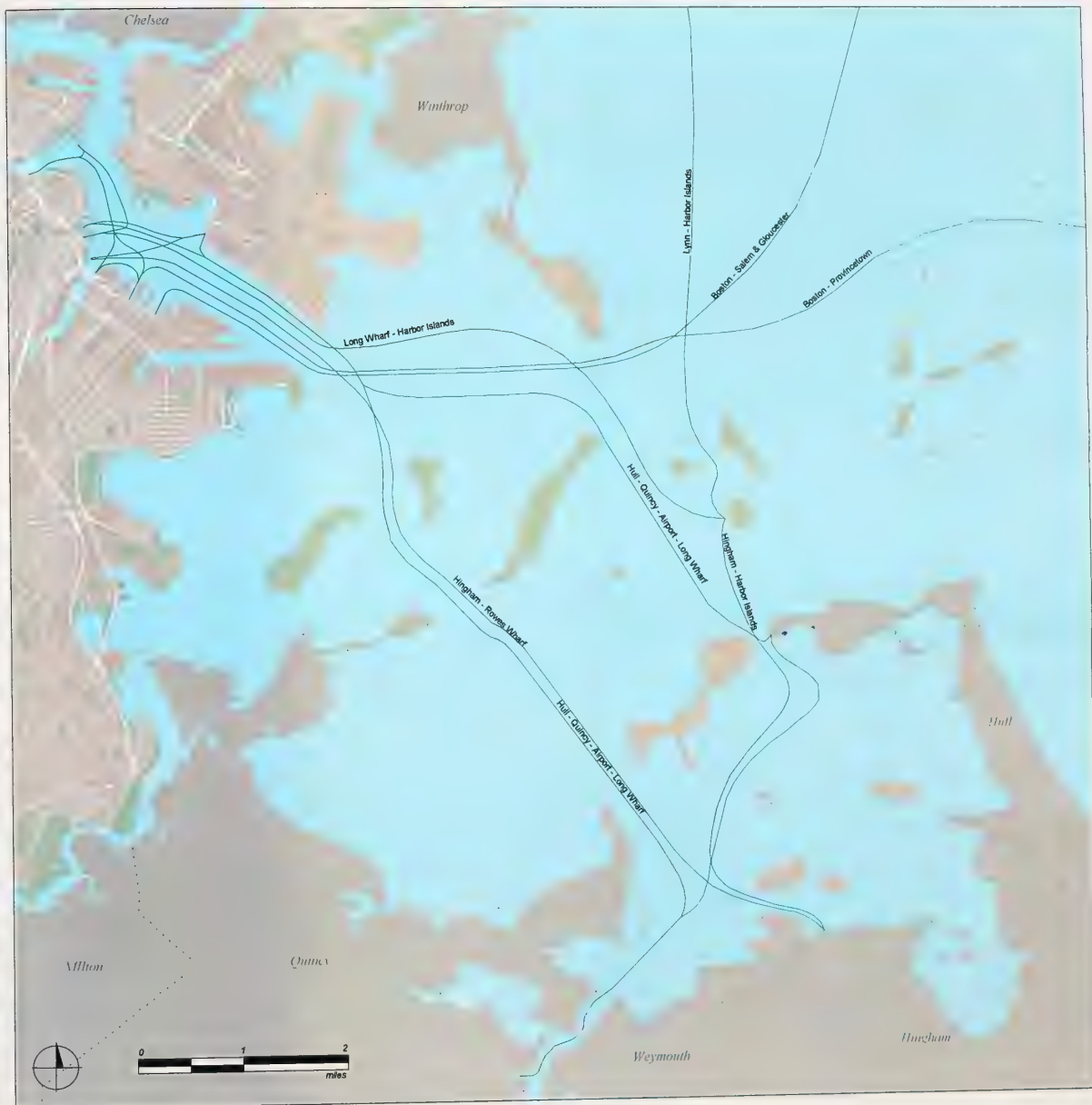






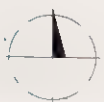












Status of Harborwalk Segments

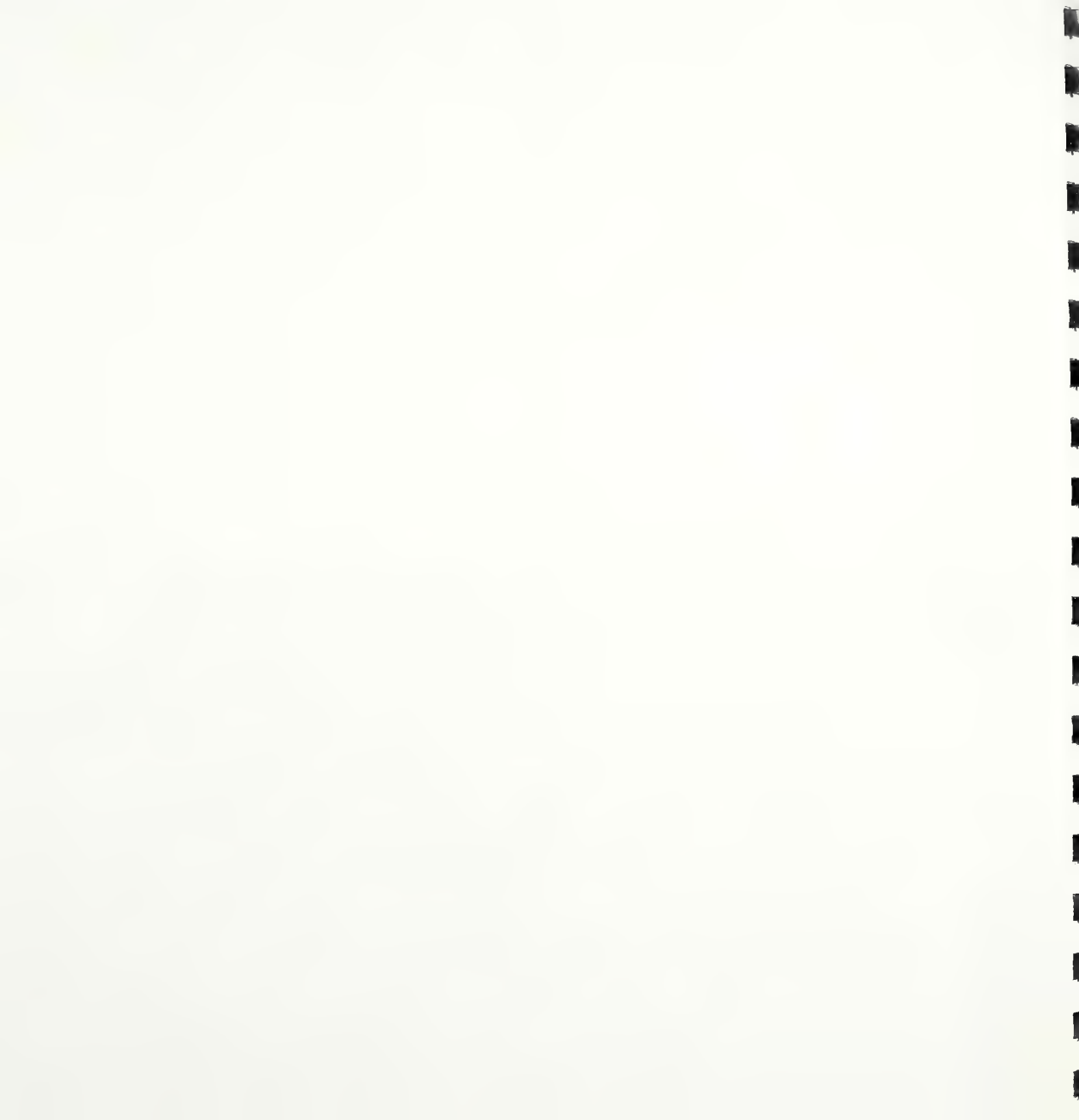
- Accessible
- - - Inaccessible

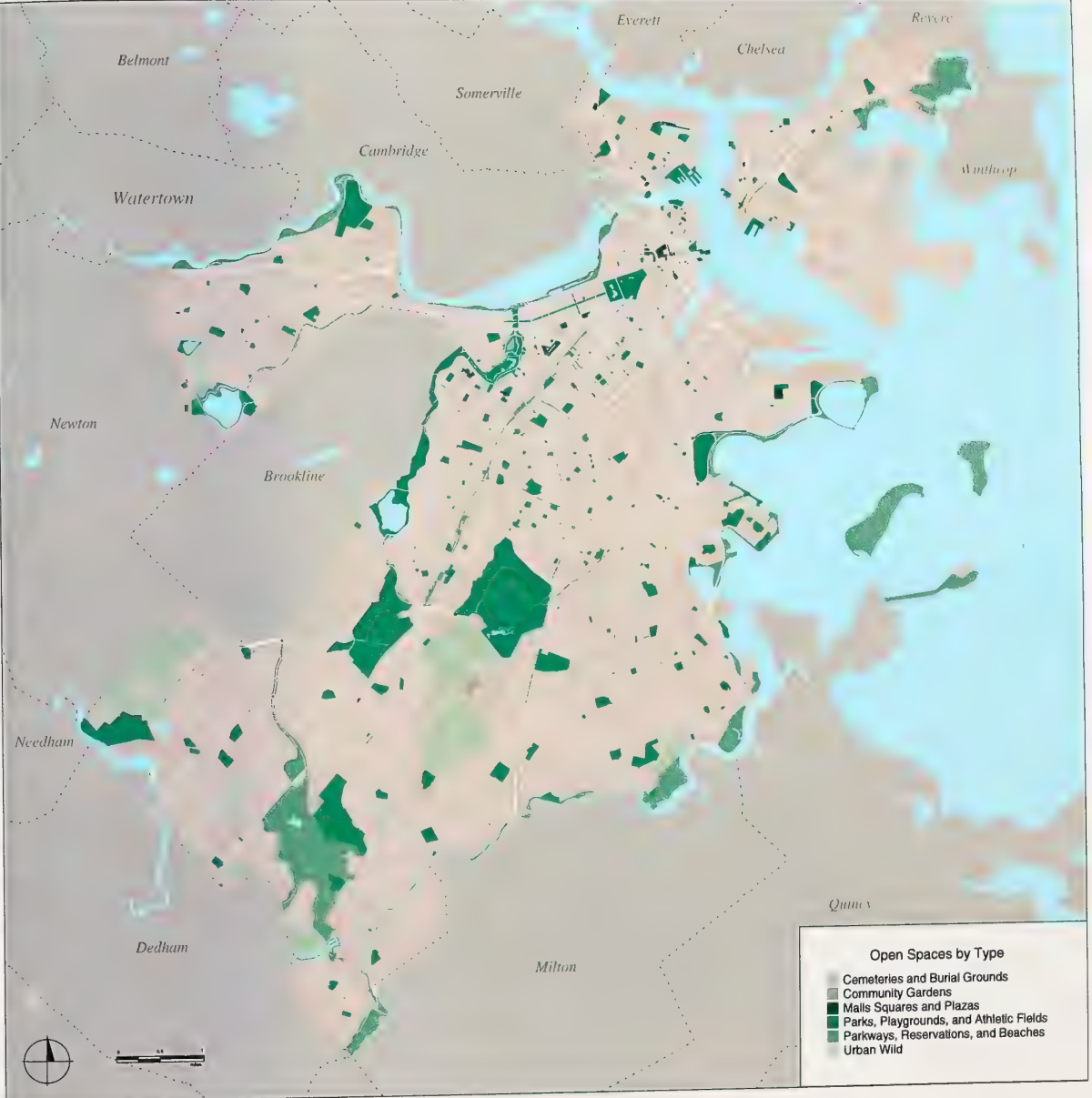




325 rotation

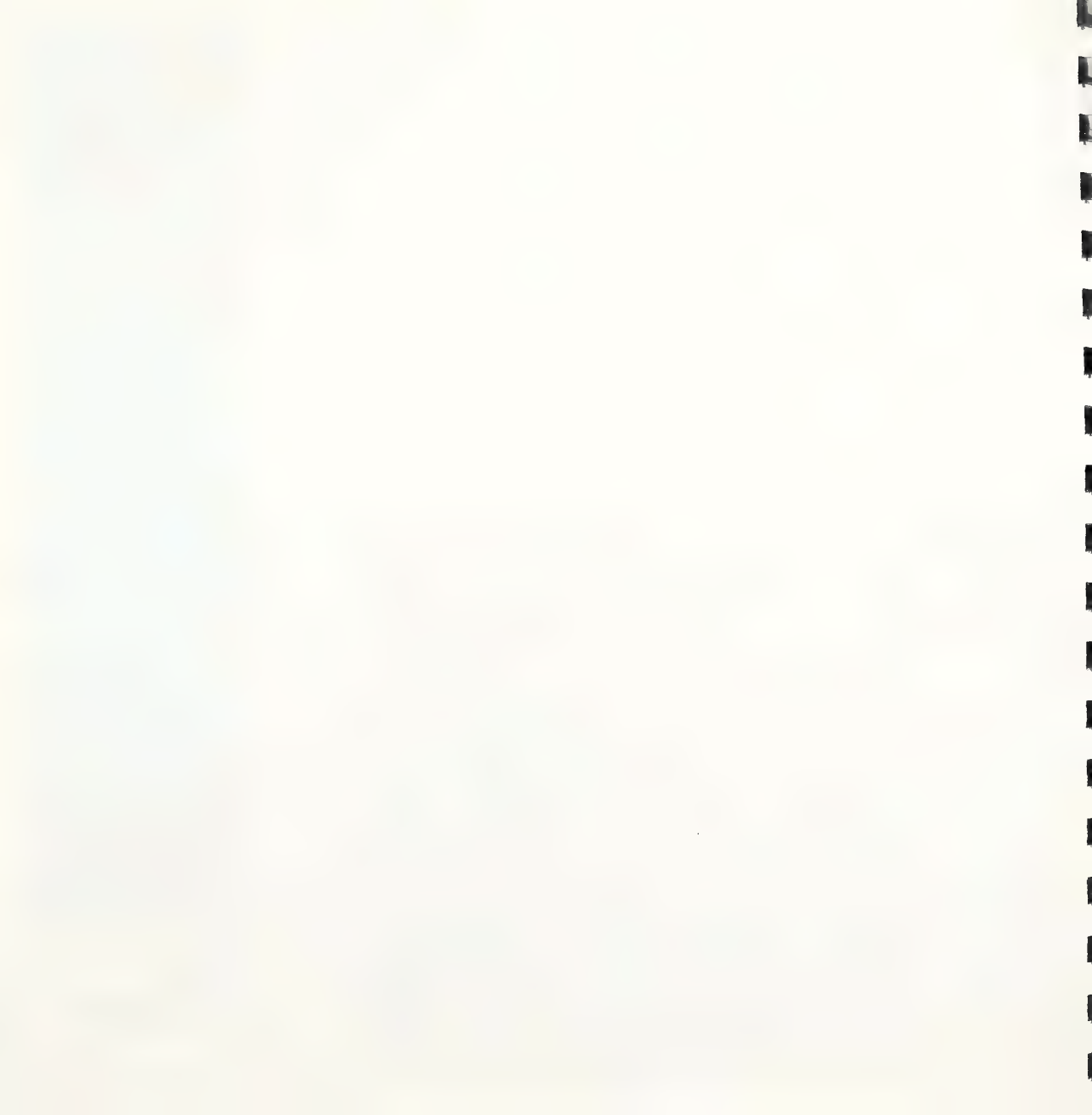






































45 degree rotate





---

# **Boston is the economic hub of New England**

Hub of the Hub

A new generation of transit

Designs for development

Fueling Boston's economic engine

Regional traffic design to protect communities



## 4.

### **Boston is the economic hub of New England**

Boston is known around the world as the hub of New England. As a new century dawns, Boston's role as an urban center will become even more important. This challenge will be to strengthen the city's infrastructure – highways and roads, mass transit, airport, universities and institutions, business centers – to create a stronger and more adaptable foundation for economic and community development. At the same time, Boston must protect and enhance its quality as one of the most livable and historically grounded cities in America. Boston needs to orient itself to the daunting challenges of a global economy dominated by technology and characterized by mobility and rapid change.

The "hub of the hub" is Downtown. One of the nation's greatest urban and economic success stories, Downtown is an alchemy of old and new. Some 375,590 people commute to jobs every day in the sleek modern towers of the Financial District, Government Center, and Downtown Crossing. Meanwhile, residents and visitors swarm around historic sites from the U.S.S. Constitution to the Old South Meeting House, walk the old streets of the North End and Beacon Hill, and explore the waterfront that defines the area from Charlestown past South Boston and into Dorchester. The planning challenge for Boston's Downtown is to manage its traffic, improve mass-transit access, strengthen the area's "walkability" and "legibility," and assure that development does not homogenize the historic urban texture that makes Downtown a special place. *[see SIDE lynch on legibility]*

In the Downtown and beyond, Boston faces the challenge of strengthening the connections between its major economic "clusters" – higher education, medicine and health care, technology, financial services, government services, and the visitor industry – and the rest of the city and region. These connections require major improvements and expansions of the region's public transportation system, beginning in the underserved neighborhoods of the city. Better mass transit creates the foundation for economic development at crossroads all over the city and region. Mass transit also is critical to the everyday quality of life in the city.

As Boston enters the new century, its advantage can be summarized in its reputation as a diverse, international city. Boston is different from any other city in the world. It offers a European scale, a bustle comparable to New York, neighborhoods with the special feel of urban villages, industries that stand among the world's best, parks that define other cities' open-space aspirations, and cultural activities that represent every corner of the globe. This is an enviable foundation upon which to build the city of the twenty-first century.

### **Elements of a strong hub**

The hub is the center of a wheel. It serves to balance and center the force of the surrounding rim. To foster a sense of coherence citywide – and regionally – while at the same time promoting the diversity essential to local economies, Boston should follow the following principles:





*Downtown should anchor the city and region with a diverse and accessible hub that is connected to the neighborhoods.* Historically, Downtown is the center of economic activity, cultural life, and transportation systems. Downtown presents Boston's image to its own people as well as to outsiders. Unlike many other cities, where Downtown provides a container for white-collar jobs but little else, Boston's Downtown is a 24-hour center of activity that brings together business, media, culture and the arts, residential areas, waterfronts, and parks. Boston's Downtown ~~is~~ builds a historic authenticity into the very fabric of everyday life. Because it is so diverse and contains so many distinct sub-districts, the challenge of Downtown is to enhance the area's legibility by strengthening the design of major roads, focal points, historic elements, and waterfront.

*Boston's position as regional hub requires a transportation system that offers significant choice for residents, visitors, commuters, and businesses.* Boston's place in the life of New England depends on a modern, multimodal transportation system that offers choices for residents, businesses, commuters, and visitors. This system should build on the city's existing infrastructure of water-, road-, transit-, and air-based transportation and strengthen the critical connections between these systems. Major crossroads – such as Logan Airport, Downtown, Longwood Medical Area, the Seaport District, Crosstown, and university areas – should provide connections between different modes of transportation. But at the same time, this system should separate these systems when they threaten each other. Cargo traffic, for example, should be channeled away from neighborhoods and mixed-use communities.

*To offer the greatest opportunity and cushion the cycles of the economy, Boston's economy should be diverse and competitive.* Diversity is the lifeblood of urban economies as well as cultural life. Diversity offers a wide range of choices and opportunities, but also insures that the economy is not dependent on any single activity. Boston's economy cannot be restricted to Downtown's "boom" sectors – financial services, medical services and research, computer software and services, higher education, real estate, and visitors industry – but needs to also promote manufacturing, port activities, and retail and wholesale businesses. The local economy needs niches for all sections of the city and for people with of all educational backgrounds. Beyond the two greatest employment centers – Downtown and Longwood Medical Area – should lie clusters of economic activity all over the city. The city needs to build on the waterfront appeal of East Boston and Charlestown, the universities in Allston/Brighton and Fenway/Kenmore, the recreational spaces near Franklin Park, the businesses along Washington Street and Dorchester Avenue, and the old industrial buildings in Dorchester and Roxbury.

*To take full advantage of both its human and physical capital, Boston needs to balance the needs of residents, commuters, and businesses of all kinds.* Development and transportation projects must be examined not only with reference to the immediate district or industry, but with reference to the broader needs of the city. Business executives argue that their firms are only as good as the labor they hire and the markets they serve. Only when Boston invests in its neighborhoods, schools, public facilities, and cultural resources can business take full advantage of the people of Boston. At the same time, neighborhoods can thrive only when businesses are given the infrastructure they need to create goods and services, innovate, and respond to national and world market.

*Boston should heed the imperatives of an ecologically sound, sustainable development.* In a modern economy, where many businesses can locate anywhere, it is important to provide a strong quality of life so businesses and their employees choose to locate here. Well-designed parks and waterfront make for a pleasant environment for businesses and residents. Cultural and



recreational opportunities draw families and visitors. Public transit makes it easy for people get around the city and reduces the hours wasted in traffic that is typical of many suburban communities. But environmental quality goes beyond the pleasantness of public spaces. It also includes the health and psychological wellbeing of the community. Addressing health problems like cancer, asthma, and obesity requires paying attention to the physical design of communities, housing, roads, transit, and parks.



## INITIATIVE: HUB OF THE HUB

The hub of any great city is its downtown. Downtown is not only the center of employment, but also a home to museums and concert halls, restaurants and nightlife, historic buildings and blocks, waterfronts and parks, city squares, public art, government and civic buildings, and residential life. When people come downtown, they should take in the full range of urban experiences. With strong urban design that stresses its historic authenticity and restless energy, downtown should provide a distinctive emblem of the city as a whole. A good downtown does not look quite like another. Visiting Downtown Boston should be a different experience than visiting the downtowns of New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, or Philadelphia. Architectural and planning styles that homogenize a downtown – which turn it into an urban mall – should be resisted. Visitors should sense the historic and topographic character of the city when they see its downtown. Above all, downtown should feel real as well as exciting.

### The vision

Over the next generation, strengthen the character of the Downtown by revitalizing the major streets that define the area and orient people, developing and highlighting parks and civic spaces as “focal points,” and enhancing the overall historic character of the area. In well-designed spaces, people find it easy to orient themselves. Downtown’s residents and visitors should also find it easy to move around with efficiency, ease, and comfort to the district’s many attractions. After the depression of the Central Artery is completed, develop parcels along the surface that strengthen the communities along the artery. Develop parks, civic spaces, and various mixed-use structures that offer greater common spaces for Bostonians as well as visitors – and that help to define connections between the inner neighborhoods and Downtown. Always focus on two complementary needs: the need for Downtown to maintain an authentic urban character that respects its history, as well as the need for Downtown to embrace new concepts in design and development that offer new opportunities in the modern era.

### Assets and opportunities

Boston’s Downtown contains a **strong base** for future development. Downtown employs 300,000 people in an area of two and a half square miles, but it is not just another “central business district.” Boston’s Downtown is marked by a sweeping diversity of people and activities. It is not only where people work, but also where many live; some 33,000 units of housing lie within a 15-minute walk of Downtown. It is a place chock full of arts and sports and historic sites. It is a place defined by real neighborhoods, communities like Chinatown and the North End, Beacon Hill and the Back Bay, east Boston and Charlestown and South Boston.

Downtown’s **compact size and “soft” boundaries** provide a way of understanding its distinctive character while also understanding how it relates to the larger urban organism. A definition of Downtown includes the Financial District, Bulfinch Triangle, Government Center, Downtown Crossing, and Chinatown. But immediately adjacent to these areas lie such nearby neighborhoods as Beacon Hill, West End, North End, Seaport District, and parts of the Back Bay and South End, which provide essential definition while at the same time offering diverse places to go for residential, business, cultural, natural, and other attractions.



Boston's Downtown offers many advantages for developing legibility and continuity. Because of its historic development, Boston's Downtown is defined by **strong corridors** that converge on the old Shawmut peninsula. These streets radiate out to the rest of the city and region. The largest of these corridors is Washington Street, which begins at the bridge to Charlestown, runs through Downtown Crossing and Chinatown, and out to West Roxbury. Other corridors include Cambridge, Congress, State, Charles, and Hanover streets.

Downtown also includes a wealth of historic and cultural resources, parks, and iconic architecture that provides **focal points** for people to live, work, and visit in the area. Post Office Square and Christopher Columbus Park, the Harborwalk, statues commemorating the Hungarian uprising and the Irish famine, City Hall, Faneuil Hall and Quincy Market, Old North Church and the adjacent Paul Revere Park, the U.S.S. Constitution, distinctive architecture in the Financial District, North Station and South Station, Chinatown, and Fort Point Channel all offer useful ways to orient and direct people Downtown. *[see MAP downtown (to be marked up by architect)]*

The project to submerge the elevated **Central Artery** underground will reconnect Boston to its waterfront and provide exciting new opportunities to develop parks and other civic spaces on the remaining Artery surface. The 27 acres of new land could contain a number of different kinds of spaces – parks, a horticultural garden, orientation centers, residential and business development. Perhaps most important, the artery development offers a unique opportunity to reconnect the city to the waterfront which was badly cut off with the elevated highway. Restoring old streets like Hanover, State, and Congress could strengthen the sense of continuity and destination that are critical for any urban district. While the city should not try to impose a nostalgic street grid on Downtown, it does have the opportunity to recover some of the elements of the old Downtown that gave it a strong sense of place. *[see SIDE big dig]*

The **emerging South Boston Waterfront District** offers other advantages and challenges to Boston's Downtown. The district, a quick walk from the Financial District and directly connected to Logan Airport via the new Ted Williams Tunnel, has already gotten a boost with the opening of the new federal court house on the Fan Pier. In 2003, one of the nation's largest convention centers will open in the heart of the district, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars in new spending and spinoffs in tourism, hotels, restaurants, and commercial and residential development. In 1999, the Boston Redevelopment Authority released a public realm plan to guide development of the district over the next generation. The plan calls for the development of a mixed-use district with extensive public access to the waterfront. *[see SIDE South Boston Waterfront]*

Another major asset is the current **investment taking place Downtown**. More than 1 million square feet of office development is in the pipeline in Boston alone at the time of this report, in addition to 800,000 square feet in neighboring Cambridge. The character of the city's skyline will change dramatically with projects such as the South Station tower, the Chinatown Millennium building, the expansion of the Prudential complex, and major buildings at 33 Arch Street and 10 St. James Street.

The Downtown provides **strong public transit** and other transportation access. Downtown has several multimodal transit nodes. North Station and South Station both receive several T lines, as well as Commuter lines and bus lines. Other transit nodes – Downtown Crossing, Park Street – receive more than one T line. The new Silver Line will run from Chinatown to Dudley Square in Roxbury. The South Boston Transitway will connect the Silver Line from South Station to the Seaport District with an underground bus route to D Street and then surface routes





south and east of D Street. Transitway stations are planned for the Federal Court House, World Trade Center, and the new Convention Center. The Seaport Public Realm Plan calls for an additional station east of the Boston Marine Industrial Park. Other service routes under consideration include linkages to the BMIP, Dry Dock No. 3, and South Boston residential neighborhood. Logan Airport provides an international center of passenger and cargo transit for all of New England – and lies just minutes away from Downtown by transit or car.

## Barriers and challenges

Despite its compact size and memorable streets and sights, Downtown often **lacks the legibility** that would make it easy for regulars and visitors to know their way around. Streets with impressive vistas or identities – like Hanover Street or Congress Street – are abruptly cut off by highways or isolated urban renewal projects. Sites that once served as great focal points – like Government Center, the location of the former Scollay Square – look barren and feel disorienting. Uses that once attracted visitors from all over and gave coherence to sub-districts, like the Theater District, have fallen victim to changes in consumer and entertainment habits. Entryways that could provide dramatic welcomes to people coming into the City – from North Station to Kneeland Street – instead disorient people at the place and time when they should be oriented.

**Downtown is marred by barriers** to pedestrian movement. Because of highways, road expansions, urban renewal, and other major projects, moving from one end of Downtown to another is difficult. [see *SIDE downtown barriers*] The Government Center Garage blocks passage along Congress Street from the Faneuil Hall area to the many attractions on Causeway Street. Congress Street itself poses formidable traffic barriers and an unattractive face from City Hall. Cambridge Street is primarily a regional artery but also links together a number of walking neighborhoods, such as Government Center, Beacon Hill, and the West End. A number of streets are cut off by the Central Artery – including Hanover, Sudbury, State, and Congress streets – but could recover some of their classic urban character when the artery is depressed early in the next century.

**Parking and traffic** pose other problems. Despite its national reputation as a “walkable” city, Downtown poses numerous dangers for pedestrians. Congress Street is a dangerous street for pedestrians because of the speed of automobile traffic. The City of Boston in 1998 designed a “traffic calming” strategy on Congress Street to address the dangerous automobile traffic, in which a wide cobblestone crosswalk will replace the two narrower crosswalks that run from City Hall to Faneuil Hall. Cambridge, State, Kneeland, and Causeway Streets are also dangerous and unattractive for considerable stretches.

While the downtown’s districts are easily distinguishable, they are also somewhat **fragmented and disconnected** from each other. Cambridge Street – from the Government Center T station, past Beacon Hill and the West End, then proceeding to the Charles River – poses other challenges. The street ties together communities with significantly different urban qualities, but is overall characterized by “dead zones” after business hours and by a car-oriented design. The city’s boulevard program has provided an opportunity for Cambridge Street to play its role as the street that unifies different styles of urban settlement and activity. Hanover Street and State Street pose different challenges to Downtown planners. Because they are interrupted by the Central Artery, their potential for connecting Downtown with the waterfront is now frustrated. When the Artery comes down in 2003, these streets could be reconnected on both



sides to provide a continuous walkway to the sea. Causeway Street, which extends from the Charlestown Bridge to Lomasney Way to the Charles River Dam and Science Museum, also offers opportunities provide strong pedestrian access to the river once the Artery is removed.

**Fragmented transit** poses another set of barriers. Making connections from one part of the Downtown to another is difficult. The prime example is the one-mile gap between North Station and South Station. These stations serve as important termini for Commuter lines from the North Shore and the South Shore and as nodes of government, business, and cultural activity. But the lack of a rail link discourages transit ridership; a North Shore resident's ability to get from North Station to a business near Chinatown, for example, requires transfers that cause many commuters to drive into the city.

**Development pressures** pose a whole different range of problems. With the opening of a new convention center in the Seaport District in 2003, Boston and Cambridge will need an additional 4,800 rooms to lodge visitors. In December 1998, the Boston Redevelopment Authority reported that more than enough new hotel rooms – 5,084 – have either been added to the existing supply, have begun construction, been approved, or begun the approval process. These new hotel rooms will create a total stock of 17,260 hotel rooms in the two cities. But with the number of visitors expected to increase even more after the convention center's opening – particularly in the traditionally slow months of winter – Boston and Cambridge will need another 4,000 hotel rooms by 2008.

Because of its rapid growth and emergence as a tourist and visitors hub, **the challenge of maintaining Downtown's authenticity** is a matter of great concern. Attractions like the Freedom Train, Faneuil Hall, and Quincy Hall marketplace provide exciting places for people to visit – and important connections with the past. But many people have expressed concerns that the “mallong” of these areas with chain stores undermines their historic integrity. Such homogenization of historic places undermines the area's character, which draws visitors in the first place. The original concept of Quincy Market – incubating home-grown businesses outside in pushcarts, then helping them “graduate” to indoors retail and restaurant space – has been lost because national chains can afford to pay higher rents. Likewise, Downtown Crossing has lost many of the “ma and pa” retailers and service businesses that gave the area a unique flavor.

Despite its great historic legacy, **Downtown does not have a comprehensive approach to historic enhancement** and marking. The Freedom Trail has undergone a major renovation in recent years, with \$15 million allocated in the City's five-year capital budget to improve paving, signage, and lighting. The Boston Historic Markers Program, managed by the Bostonian Society, places plaques to note the contributions of people, places, and events throughout the city. Downtown has 27 such markers which help to interpret the city's history. But many aspects of Downtown's history are unmarked – and require more than plaques or signs to convey the significance of the area's legacy.

## Actions

**The challenges for the state include . . .**

- **Create an inclusive process for the design of the 27 acres of land that will be created by the depression of the Central Artery.** In recent years, a number of different organizations have suggested different visions for the wide belt of land that will be reclaimed when the Central Artery is moved underground as part of the \$10.8 billion Big Dig project. Some advocacy groups have proposed that the land be transformed into a greensward that provides the Downtown with a



major new place for active and passive outdoors recreation. Others have proposed that the land be used to create neighborhood-scale connections from one side of the current artery to the other. The Commonwealth should insure that all of the parties that will be affected by the design – neighborhoods, Downtown, Government Center, cultural and historic institutions, visitors – be brought into a process that is open and thorough.

### **The challenges for the city include . . .**

- **Strengthen the street definition of Downtown to place City Hall at the center.**

Downtown's major streets play a critical role in defining Downtown. The major streets all converge on City Hall, underscoring its central position in the city and providing a midpoint for people traveling from one area to another. With City Hall located at the middle of the major streets, people could understand how they related to different sub-districts by relating the major street to City Hall. City Hall would serve as a way station for people walking from Beacon Hill to the Financial District, from the North End to Downtown Crossing, or from South Station to Bulfinch Triangle.

- **Fix the broken streets of Downtown.** Because of the upcoming depression of the Central Artery, State, Hanover, North Washington, and Congress Streets will all have the potential to foster connections to areas long fragmented by the highway. Other streets, such as Tremont Street and Cambridge Street, suffer from poor definition because of scattered development patterns. The challenge is to rebuild these streets as continuous corridors that help orient people to the whole Downtown and its many sub-districts. Such a project would use a number of design strategies – development of more continuous sidewalks, creating continuous street “walls” with appropriately scaled buildings, enhanced use of street lighting, use of consistent or complementary building materials, placement of street furniture and public art, and enhancement of vistas.

- **Strengthen Downtown's civic spaces.** Downtown is an area of many diverse destinations. Each destination should not only provide a special activity or attraction, but also serve to orient people to the whole area. A model for good civic spaces is Post Office Square, a 1.7-acre park that serves as an “outdoor living room” for workers and visitors in the Financial District – and helps people make the connection to the other “rooms” of the Downtown. This park, nestled inside a number of significant buildings that provide a steady stream of users, provides an intimate feel for gathering and enjoying the outdoors. The park's design is critical to its success. It is defined by well-designed entrances, paths and trellises, benches and water fountains, small restaurants and pushcarts, information kiosks, pieces of public art. The entrances to a 1,400-car underground garage are located and designed to minimize disruption of park activities. The lessons of Post Office Square should be applied to other focal points Downtown – and throughout the city. To succeed, each of these places needs a base of people nearby to assure a regular source of users.

- **Enhance the historic character of the Downtown.** Preservationists and others have developed a menu of strategies to enhance Downtown's historic character. These efforts should help Bostonians and visitors understand all periods of the city's history – not just the colonial era. The Downtown should find ways to commemorate how sea-based industries, immigration, trolleys and subways, modern retailing, urban renewal, highways, tourism, and the building boom of the 1980s all shaped the character of Downtown, the city, and the region. Markers, photographs, electronic listening posts, and historically sensitive architecture could help bring Downtown's history alive. Rather than simply “pickeling” select pieces of Boston's history,



historic commemoration should build old pieces of Downtown into the ever-changing fabric of the city. The depression of the Central Artery, for example, gives the city an opportunity not only to stitch together the broken pieces of the city's fabric, but also to explore and commemorate how structures like the artery helped to change the face of American cities. A piece of the artery might even be appropriate as a form of sculpture, just as Berlin has kept a piece of the Berlin War to commemorate the Cold War era. [see *SIDE historic downtown*]

- **Increase the housing supply to maintain the 24-hour Downtown.** To maintain Downtown as a 24-hour district, new housing is essential. Downtown should buzz with activity at all hours. A residential presence creates demand for the restaurants, stores, and arts and recreational activities that make the area a lively place for other residents, visitors, and commuters. Boston needs to aggressively pursue development strategies that keeps it exciting for people of all backgrounds and interests at all times. Young workers and other workers are drawn to the vibrancy of a Downtown threaded with residential communities.

### **The challenges for institutions include . . .**

- **Make civic spaces accessible and connected throughout Downtown – especially pedestrian and historic spaces.** Boston contains a number of large-scale developments that often interrupt the pedestrian scale of the Downtown; sports arenas, government buildings, office buildings, and garages create serious blockages and are not always inviting to pedestrians. But all of these buildings could provide important public spaces. Improving building facades, opening building atriums and courtyards to public use, providing good signage, and offering basic amenities to pedestrians could help to make the whole Downtown more seamless and inviting for all. Ultimately, Downtown stakeholders should adopt the goal of a district that offers as many paths, connections, and amenities as possible so that pedestrians never encounter frustrations walking around and exploring the area.





## INITIATIVE: A NEW GENERATION OF TRANSIT

Public transit provides the vital circulatory system of any great city. Subways, trolleys, buses, commuter lines, and water transit offer efficient and inexpensive access to the whole city. Transit is essentially a matter of choice. Cities with good public transit give people the option of whether or not to buy a car and the opportunity to live wherever they want in the city. Good transit systems also provide the foundation for a vibrant community. A variety of places and activities develop up around transit nodes, offering people convenient places to shop, eat, meet people, and visit cultural attractions. Public health also benefits from good transit systems. The fewer cars on the road, the less people will suffer from asthma and other pollution-related disease – and the more they will be inclined to walk. Public transit contributes to a “virtuous cycle” of health, culture, business, and community by anchoring communities while at the same time offering people access to resources all over the region.

### Vision

In the next generation, Boston should strengthen its mass transit system to provide world-class connections to every neighborhood in the metropolitan area. The city’s transit service should never be more than a 10-minute walk or a 10-minute wait. Boston should connect existing rail lines with a circle line that allows people to travel easily between activity centers outside the Downtown. Other new transit lines are also essential to foster development and provide better service to jobs, shopping, school, and other destinations. Mass transportation should also be considered the critical element in fostering economic development and housing opportunities all over the region. Key development areas include Crosstown and Dudley Square in Roxbury, the Allston-Brighton rail yards, the Seaport District, and several sections of Dorchester.

### Assets and opportunities

Historically, Boston has offered **one of the best public transit systems** in the United States. Now the sixth largest system in the nation, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority serves a population of 2,608,638 in 78 cities and towns with an overall area of 1,038 square miles. The MBTA operates three rapid transit lines, five streetcar systems, four trackless trolley systems, 13 commuter rail lines, and 155 bus routes. The average weekday ridership for the whole system is 1,127,417. *[see MAP of public transportation infrastructure]*

**Hundreds of thousands of daily commuters** provide a huge market for mass transportation. Boston boasts two of the biggest employment centers in the nation, Downtown and the Longwood Medical Area. Boston’s urban core – which includes sections of Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville – has a total of 500,000 jobs. An analysis by the Central Planning Transportation Staff found that more than 121,000 of those jobs are filled by residents of the urban core, 144,000 are filled by residents of the other 27 cities and towns inside Route 128, and the rest come from areas beyond Route 128. Not surprisingly, transit use has increased where the state made significant investments in transit facilities. Communities served by the Franklin and Attleboro Commuter lines, the Southwest Corridor, the new park-and-ride garage at Forge Park/Route 495 saw transit ridership increase from 5 to 25 percent. Private buses provided additional alternatives for communities not served by the MBTA. *[see SIDE downtown transit tied to neighborhoods]*



**Federal programs provide incentives** to build mass transit facilities. Federal programs like the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and its successor, the Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21), encourage states and localities to develop alternatives for transportation money. TEA-21 authorizes \$6.8 billion for transit in FY 2000, with a requirement that a minimum of \$5.8 billion be spent in that year. Subways, shuttles, bicycle networks, pedestrian paths, and transit-oriented development all offer alternatives to investments in highways and large road projects. The Clean Air Act offers incentives of a different kind. To achieve compliance with air standards, many cities have developed aggressive efforts to encourage residents and workers to use transit instead of automobiles. The welfare-to-work initiative of the federal government also offers incentives for developing new models of public transit that connect workers to the employment centers that are dispersed throughout the metropolis. Federal courts also have ruled that the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority must provide rail transit service along the Green Line's E trunk to provide efficient transit service and meet federal anti-pollution standards. [see *SIDE ISTEA TEA-21*]

### **Barriers and challenges**

The greatest barrier improved mass transit is the **high cost of major new transit systems**. Depending on the nature of the rail line – whether it will be built on the surface or underground, how much land acquisition would be required – the cost of building new transit lines can reach billions of dollars. The North-South Rail Link would cost \$2 billion, by most estimates. Construction of the Orange Line cost \$734 million (in 1987 dollars) after the acquisition of the right of way. The City of Boston competes with suburban jurisdictions for limited MBTA funds. Operating costs also discourage construction of new lines. Total revenues from passenger fares pay only \$196 million of the MBTA's \$905.6-million annual budget, according to 1994 data supplied by the Federal Transportation Administration. The shortfall in revenues must be made up with federal and state subsidies. In recent years, the MBTA has called for increases in fares to make up some of the difference. Boston charges the lowest fare of any major urban transit system in the U.S. Subway fares have been 85 cents and bus fares have been 60 cents since 1991.

As strong as is Boston's transit infrastructure, **automobile travel has steadily increased** in Boston. Automobile traffic is growing at a rate of 2.5 percent annually, with a resulting 80 percent of all regional highways being congested during rush hour. Automobile registration increased from 156,000 (1970) to 185,978 (1982) to 260,836 (1990) to 303,226 (1999), according to the state Registry of Motor Vehicles. In the 1990s alone, registration increased 16 percent. More than 600,000 cars come into Boston each day. With jobs at dispersed locations throughout the region, many workers have no choice but to commute by car.

In the past generation, **patterns of commuting and traveling around the city have changed**. While Boston and Cambridge together added 54,000 jobs to their local economies in the 1980s, the metropolitan planning area's other 99 cities and towns added over 200,000 jobs. As employment has become dispersed throughout the region, the radial or "spoke" design of Boston's transit system has become obsolete. The system needs new cross-town or "rim" connections between the new economic nodes that have developed on the outskirts of the city. A report of the Central Transportation Planning Staff concluded: "While commuters to the urban core have a choice of driving or using mass transit, most commuters to suburban workplaces have little choice. Highway space is limited and, with the long commuting distances, many miles are being traveled. This has led to congestion in the suburbs that approaches the severity of



congestion in the core area, even though the employment level in any one suburb is well below that of the urban core.” Private bus services and improvements on commuter lines and facilities have been unable to respond to this dispersed demand for means of commuter transportation. *[see MAP of regional highway system]*

Boston’s Commuter rail systems do not bring workers to their ultimate destination efficiently because of the **gap between North and South stations**. One of the greatest barriers to wider transit use is the inconvenience of a Commuter Line system that brings passengers to either North Station or South Station but does not provide a link between the two. North Shore residents coming into North Station experience excessive marginal costs in transferring to lines that will take them to the Financial District and other areas served by the Red Line; South Shore residents experience the same difficulty getting business areas served by the Orange and Red Lines.

A look at a map of Boston’s transit system shows **clear patterns of inadequate service**. The area of the greatest need is the heart of the city – communities like Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. Other communities also suffer from inadequate service.

In recent years, the MBTA has expressed a **preference for using buses** to operate new service lines. The new Silver line, which will provide the replacement for the elevated Orange line that ran down Washington Street, will use articulated buses – 60-foot vehicles that appear to be two buses joined at the center with a flexible portion that allows for turns. The MBTA has resisted restoring the service on the Green Line’s E trunk from Heath Street to Forest Hills because of the higher costs associated with trolleys. The type of vehicle and right of way for the Urban Ring – the circumferential transit system under consideration for Boston and five neighboring cities – has not been determined. It may use articulated buses rather than rapid transit lines or trolley service. Articulated vehicles allow for substantial savings, especially during peak travel periods, because they require one rather than two drivers for the same number of riders. *[see SIDE Silver Line+]* *[see MAP Silver Line]*

A related problem is that major projects often **take years to implement**. The replacement service for the Washington Street Orange line has taken almost two decades. Improvements and additions to the major Commuter lines have also taken decades to expand and modernize, despite the vocal activism of suburban constituencies.

In addition to **inadequate location of rail and bus lines**, Boston’s transit system also suffers from uneven service provision. Service on all transit lines is driven by commuter patterns, even though Boston is a significant hub of activity during off-peak hours. Many large employers – especially hospitals and the hotel and hospitality industry – require workers to work outside the standard 9-to-5 work shift. Employers have testified that they have cut back on shifts or declined to expand their operations because of the limited hours of the transit system. Cultural and recreational activities also suffer from the traditional commuter model of transit service. For the whole city to thrive, economic and cultural institutions must form a vast web with transit service forming the threads that extend to all corners of the city at all times of day and night. *[see MAP of bus system]*

A final problem is that many communities **lack the strong advocacy** needed to make a case for major transit investments. New York’s Straphangers group, which serves as a watchdog and advocate for the city’s subway system, has no counterpart in Boston. In 1999, a new organization called the Federation for Public Transportation was formed to augment the efforts of other advocacy groups such as the Conservation Law Foundation, Sierra Club, WalkBoston, and Action for Public Transportation.



## Actions

### The challenges for the state include . . .

- **Build the Urban Ring.** The Urban Ring is a circumferential transportation system that runs through the high-density neighborhoods beyond Boston's Downtown, including portions of Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Somerville, Everett, and Chelsea. The Urban Ring would complement the region's existing radial system of transit, in which major transit routes extend from Downtown out to the neighborhoods. [see *SIDE Urban Ring+*] [see *MAP of the Urban Ring*]

- **Consider extending the Silver line down Blue Hill Avenue to Mattapan Square.** Once the Silver line moves from South Boston through Downtown Crossing to Dudley Square, there are two possibilities for extending the line – further down Washington Street to Forest Hills or down Blue Hill Avenue. The Boston Transportation Department, which is conducting a major analysis of transportation in the city, should consider which of these two options best serves the most people in the city. Because of the strength of the Orange line, which is near Washington Street and ends at Forest Hills, the Blue Hill Avenue option might be more attractive. Regular service on a dedicated right of way would take advantage of an ideal corridor for mass transit, which draws a high bus ridership and is not burdened with excessively high levels of automobile traffic. It would also reinforce the Mayor's \$58-million effort to revitalize Blue Hill Avenue from Dudley Street to Columbia Road, the Browne Fund's work to improve the Mattapan Square area, and other efforts to develop the Franklin Park area. [see *SIDE Blue Hill Ave*]

- **Consider creation of a Columbia Road trolley.** In community meetings in Dorchester, residents expressed a strong desire to restore Columbia Road to its historic character as a streetcar boulevard. One possibility is the creation of a new "Aqua line" streetcar or trolley system. The line, with a dedicated right of way, would extend from the Boston Harbor at Columbia Point down Columbia Road, through Franklin Park (where automobiles would be banned), and ending at Forest Hills Station. Modeled after the old street trolleys that once traversed Columbia Road, the Aqua line has the potential to stitch together the city from end to end. After a trip from Boston Harbor to Forest Hills, a transit rider could transfer to a bus that goes to the new Millennium Park in West Roxbury. The Aqua line offers the opportunity to restore Columbia Road as a vital piece of the Emerald Necklace, foster better connections to Franklin Park, and protect Franklin Park from automobile traffic that threatens to tear its fabric. More than just a transportation system, which replicates existing service on the No. 16 bus, the Aqua line would serve as the transit equivalent of a parkway that connects some of the most important but inaccessible city resources. In warm months – from summer to the peak of "leaf-peeping" season – the trolley could be open to the elements like many tour trolleys. The line would also help to protect Franklin Park from being overrun with traffic – a major concern of park advocates, the Franklin Park Zoo, and others. It would strengthen the possibilities for economic and community development along the whole corridor.

- **Strengthen the city's bus network to improve crosstown service.** Because of the tangled pattern of major thoroughfares in the city, developing crosstown bus service is often difficult. Continuous thoroughfares are needed to provide ample right-of-ways for buses to travel efficiently. Residents of Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan experience great difficulty traveling east or west. These difficulties would not be answered by the development of the Urban Ring. For the foreseeable future, bus transit is probably the best answer to lateral movement. The City's transportation analysis should consider strategies that would provide





crosstown travel to insure efficient access to all of the city's employment, educational, and recreational attractions. The City should consider development of new rights-of-way to facilitate bus travel.

- **Improve Commuter Line service.** A number of Commuter lines do not stop at key locations. Expansion of Commuter service at places like Upham's Corner could provide whole new constituencies for all kinds of public transit, as well as improving the critical nodes of commercial and social activity nearby.

- **Consider conversions of some existing commuter lines to rapid transit service.** Sometimes the best way to expand transit service is to reconfigure existing infrastructure to serve new or expanded roles. Such is the case with the possible use of Commuter lines for standard transit service. Mayor Menino has secured a commitment by the MBTA to provide everyday commuter access to Vawkey station near Fenway Park on the Framingham line; previously, this stop has been used only for the 81 games of the Boston Red Sox baseball schedule. Another possible conversion involves the Fairmount line that goes from Readville in Hyde Park to South Station via Fairmount, Morton Street, and Upham's Corner. Converting this Commuter line to rapid transit service could provide parts of Dorchester and Mattapan with significantly improved access to the rest of the city on an extended Red line. This action might not be necessary if the Columbia Road (Aqua) and Blue Hill Avenue (Silver) transit lines were established.

- **Consider a cheaper version of the North-South Rail Link.** The North-South Rail Link would create a rail tunnel linking North Station and South Station, allowing both commuter trains to serve both downtown stations and Amtrak to provide continuous service from Maine to Washington. The problem the project is that it would cost \$2 billion to \$4 billion. Amtrak has agreed to finance an independent financial analysis to determine whether private development along the Rail Link could pay for the project. That study could determine whether a full-scale North-South Rail Link is feasible in the next generation. A compromise approach might be to build a shuttle train – similar to New York's cross-town shuttle between Pennsylvania Station and Grand Central Station – that provides a direct connection between the two stations but does not require full Commuter line service to both stations. Such a shuttle would not require as much space at either station for trains to approach the station and turn around.

#### **Challenges for the city include . . .**

- **Improve the right-of-way passages for buses.** The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority reports that one of its greatest problems in providing reliable bus service is the clogging of city streets due to inadequate channeling of traffic on street grids, double-parking, and trucks unloading merchandise to retailers. The Boston Transportation Department's comprehensive traffic study will include identification of "transit corridors" where the needs of buses and trolleys would be given priority over the needs of cars. Such corridors might include Massachusetts Avenue, Huntington Avenue, Commonwealth Avenue, Brighton Avenue, Centre Street, Dorchester Avenue, Columbia Road, and the two Washington Streets.

#### **Challenges for businesses and institutions include . . .**

- **Consider private and nonprofit additions to public transit service.** The mass transit systems that helped to build America's great cities began as private companies, before their takeover by public authorities during periods of national economic depression. But in the last generation, a wide range of private and nonprofit organizations have supplemented mass transit with an extensive network of shuttles to connect major employment centers with public transit



systems and garages. At a time of economic growth, it might make sense to consider development of private and nonprofit corporations to implement well-defined improvements in the transit network. The Aqua Line – extending from Forest Hills through Franklin Park and Columbia Road to the University of Massachusetts – might be a candidate for such a transit line. Such a corporation would have to cooperate with state and city agencies, but might be able to carry out the project without direct public subsidies. Advocates of the North-South Rail Link maintain that that project could be privately financed as well. The use of tax increment financing might provide a way to combine public and private support for new lines.

- **Build a public database on transportation.** Until Boston gains a powerful voice for advocacy for mass transit, the region needs to develop comprehensive information systems so that city planners, community advocates, developers, and others can press for appropriate investments in the city's transit system. Such information systems might be developed at one or more of the area's universities, in conjunction with organizations such as the Central Transportation Planning Service, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, Boston Society of Architects, community development corporations, and other organizations.



## INITIATIVE: DESIGNS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Good city design is important not only for creating pleasant spaces where people feel comfortable; it is also important to promote the economic environment of the city. A good city offers spaces for people to come together to buy and sell a wide range of goods. Economic and transit nodes thrive when people enjoy a wide range of convenient choices about what to buy and sell, see and do. Good urban spaces require comfortable places to walk, convenient places to stop, and agreeable sights to behold. Rather than serving only the needs of the automobile, well-designed city neighborhoods and districts make it easy for people of all ages to get around by foot, bicycle, and public transit. The more reasons people have to visit a district, the more they will do so.

### The vision

By the time of Boston's 400th anniversary, economic development will take place within the framework of strong standards for streetscape and urban design. Projects such as "big box" retail outlets, other neighborhood businesses, community facilities like health centers, and houses and apartment buildings will follow standards and incentives that strengthen the urban and transit character of those projects. Buildings will be located up to the street line, parking will be restricted and located behind buildings, facades will offer interesting architectural details, and entrances and windows will be located in the fronts of the buildings. Developers and businesses will benefit from a stronger transit system, denser development, and more predictable building standards and approval processes.

### Assets and opportunities

One of the imperatives for strong urban design lies with the fact that **developers and businesses favor a predictable environment**. Despite assumptions to the contrary, they have argued that strict urban planning standards are essential to development in today's economy. "Being clear about the rules and regulations is most important," said Frank Keefe, former director of the State Office of State Planning. "The developer will either say 'go' or 'no go.' If anything, cities can be more profitable with these principles." David Vickery of Spaulding and Slye added: "The private sector will do what you tell it to do. . . . Developers are willing to play by tough rules." [see *SIDE streetscape and development*]

**Neighborhood businesses and trade groups**, such as community development corporations, play a critical role in revitalizing neighborhoods. Community development corporations, Boston Main Streets districts, boards of trade, and neighborhoods associations and councils all help to bundle resources and create a more attractive environment for small businesses that are the lifeblood of the neighborhoods. Developers and other business leaders have lauded the impact of the Main Streets in the 16 districts where it is located in Boston. Attractive facades, sidewalks, street furniture, banners and signs, and other "cosmetic" improvements send positive signals about the potential for profitable business enterprises. Just as the proverbial "broken window" signals the downfall of a neighborhood or business district, a "fixed window" heralds the concern and commitment to making an area viable.

**Boston's zoning code** offers a number of creative tools for developing well-designed business districts. Article 6 of the Zoning Code allows parking lots to be shared if the lots are



within 1,400 feet of the businesses and if the customers of businesses sharing space do not overlap. Aggressive incentives to encourage businesses to share excess spaces could reduce the overall number of parking spaces in a business district without inconveniencing people who need to use cars. The Zoning Code also restricts the use of variances to cases in which strictly following the code would cause unreasonable hardships. The Zoning Code allows for the establishment of overlay districts, which set specific standards for development in areas with common design, access, and environmental needs.

The city also benefits from a **strong development climate**, which makes developers and businesses more willing to respond to design concerns of City agencies. When pressed by City officials, retail and service businesses have displayed a willingness to adhere to design standards that are essential to maintain the quality of the urban environment. Banks, fast-food restaurants, grocery stores, and even “big box” retailers have stated that they would be willing to adhere to design standards that improve the appearance of the business district. One of the most notable examples is the Star Market on Commonwealth Avenue in Allston, which provides a strong “street wall,” transparent frontage, and good pedestrian access, as well as convenient parking in back of the building. [see *SIDE washington street*]

There is also a growing awareness that **good design means lower development costs**. Construction of parking spaces does not constitute the “highest and best” use of land when the property is located close to a neighborhood business district and transit service. The capital costs of a parking space range from \$2,000 to \$5,000 for a surface lot, and \$10,000 to \$12,000 a space in a two- or three-level garage – plus debt interest of 7 to 10 percent and yearly operations and maintenance costs. Many community organizations understand that vibrant commercial districts require adequate parking, but also places for pedestrians and room for “infill” development on the street fronts. The proliferation of Boston Main Streets districts has also increased community and business awareness of the importance of storefront improvements, street furniture and amenities, good signage, and other small design improvements.

## Barriers and challenges

Strong urban design requires strict standards that provide a predictable environment for all businesses and homeowners, but Boston’s Zoning Board of Appeals provides numerous opportunities to gain **exemptions from city zoning regulations**. Despite the fact that the Zoning Code allows for exemptions only when unwarranted hardships are imposed by the Code, numerous exemptions are granted to development schemes that do not represent specific hardships. Stronger adherence to the Code is essential to the development of strong designs for development.

Another barrier to good design is the **growing impact of the automobile and parking** on development. The share of all trips taken by car has increased by 2.5 percent annually in recent years, leading to growing pressure on developers and businesses to provide parking spaces. Automobile registration reached 300,000 in 1999, but there are only about 41,000 off-street public and private spaces and several hundred metered spaces in Downtown Boston and adjacent residential districts. When those parking spaces take large swaths of land, they create large and often ugly voids in the fabric of the public space. Since more than 200,000 people enter the city every day for work, there is pressure every day for more parking spaces to be added to the city’s inventory. Development projects under consideration for Boston’s Downtown and nearby neighborhoods in 1999 would add some 13,000 spaces to the city’s inventory. New parking





inventories could dramatically mar the quality of the appearance of the nearby streetscape and urban design. Additional parking spaces also encourage more people to drive, leading to greater congestion and a less pleasant environment for pedestrians.

In recent years, **big-box retailing** has posed a serious challenge to the urban design of the city. Large-scale retailers – selling merchandise such as clothing, groceries, furniture, auto parts, and automobile services – damage the public realm in two ways. First, they bring greater levels of single-destination traffic to the area which exacerbates congestion. Second, they often require large parking lots that create large voids in the public fabric. In many ways, the large-scale retailers' interest in the city is good news; the return of retailers that left the city in the 1960s and 1970s to communities like Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan portends progress in reviving these communities. But without strict standards to ensure that the retailers will build structures that enhance the overall quality of the neighborhoods, these big-box structures are likely to “blow out” the communities rather than knit them together into pedestrian- and community-friendly business districts. [see *SIDE sprawl*]

Most housing developers that serve the **high end of the housing market** have shown a tendency to design new parking facilities into their structures. Even in neighborhoods where everyday automobile use is unnecessary – such as the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, North End, and South End – new developments have added thousands of new parking spaces to the city's inventory.

## Actions

### Challenges for the city include . . .

- **Lobby for new state planning policy.** The City of Boston should lobby the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to adopt a state policy to promote density at strategic locations, especially areas near transit nodes. Statewide action is needed because the quality of design and transit in one place affects it everywhere in the region. When strategic nodes are developed densely and attractively at Davis Square in Somerville or Central Square in Cambridge, for example, communities along the Red line in Boston benefit. But when nodes in Fields Corner in Boston or Alewife in Cambridge do not concentrate development, the rest of the commuters on the transit line suffer. The whole system is only as good as its parts. The Office of State Planning established comprehensive regulations for managing growth and development during the first Dukakis Administration from 1975 to 1979.

- **Implement the BTD's streetscape guidelines.** The 1999 publication of *Streetscape Guidelines for Boston's Major Roads* by the Boston Transportation Department provides a helpful first step toward designing roads for all users. The “major roads” designation covers all roads smaller than thoroughfares (such as Interstate 93 and VFW Parkway) and local roads (neighborhood streets usually no wider than two lanes, intended for immediate access for residential uses). The guidelines call for street design that responds to a wide range of local factors – such as transit service, the need for sufficient pedestrian and bicycle access, the character of nearby buildings, significant views, landscaping needs, and handicap access. The guidelines call for “traffic-calming” strategies to make the roadways safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as reducing congestion by channeling traffic onto thoroughfares best suited to handling large volumes of traffic. The guidelines also call for selective use of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to create quicker access for public-transit vehicles as well as cars with many passengers. The guidelines also call for the development of wide sidewalks, better



crosswalks, improved lighting and street furniture, public art, signage, and improved landscaping. Vigorous and creative projects to follow the principles outlined in the guidelines – as well as everyday oversight of public and private projects – could dramatically improve the public character and safety of all of Boston's roads. That would foster a better business environment at the same time.

- **Design roadways for multimodal transportation.** As part of Access Boston 2000-1010, the Boston Transportation Department's comprehensive transportation plan, roadways throughout the city should be designed to accommodate all modes of transportation. Roadways that provide major public transit service – like Huntington Avenue, Commonwealth Avenue, Blue Hill Avenue, Washington Street, and Centre Street – should provide first priority to trolleys and buses especially during peak service times.

- **Establish overlay districts.** Overlay districts should play an important role in shaping a positive development environment. Overlay districts establish clear development and design guidelines for areas with special qualities and assets such as transit nodes and waterfronts. In an overlay district, developers considering projects can be confident about how their efforts fit into the larger scheme of development. In a transit overlay district, for example, developers can be confident that public transit will bring in customers, a minimal population will live within walking distance, and the streets and sidewalks in the overlay district will be pedestrian friendly.

- **Develop good parking lot design.** Parking must be limited in densely populated areas served by public transit, and it should be located in the backs of buildings rather than lots in the front of buildings. To make behind-the-building parking areas work – so that storefronts will come to the edge of the street and provide a variety of places to visit on a walk – the area needs good signage to direct drivers and strong security systems to assure visitors of their safety. The best model for parking lots for large-scale development is the Star Market in Allston, which requires only 150 spaces located behind the store; some 70 percent of all customers walk into the store. By contrast, retail facilities in most suburban communities require five slots per 1,000 square feet.

- **Create transit-oriented centers with a mix of commercial activities and critical mass of housing.** Transportation planning cannot be separated from community planning. The City should make creation of a "critical mass" of population at select centers a cornerstone of its community- and enterprise-building efforts. Middle-income housing should be considered as part of a larger strategy of economic development, not just a means to provide shelter. Generally speaking, 2,000 to 3,000 units of housing are required to support local retail businesses. Because of their need for a catchment area of 100,000 population, major supermarkets usually require substantial spaces for parking. Because of the costs of housing development – about \$175 per square foot for new housing, about \$135 per square foot for rehabilitation of existing units (\$100 in hard costs, \$35 in soft costs) – government subsidies will be required to create greater residential density in neighborhoods like Forest Hills and Jackson Square.



## INITIATIVE: FUELING BOSTON'S ECONOMIC ENGINE

City economies thrive not only when they offer dynamic and connected places to do business, but also when they provide businesses with the infrastructure and assistance they need. Cities uniquely “cluster” activity to bring together cutting-edge expertise, technologies, and systems – which, in turn, creates dynamic opportunities for innovation and growth for the whole economy. But many startup businesses do not have the time or knowledge to seek out the best city sites for their offices, production facilities, or distribution networks. Many businesses contemplating expansion do not have access to data about new sites for their plants. Even when they are within walking distance, many businesses lack access to the legal, accounting, technology, management, and marketing know-how that thrives in cities like Boston. Strong cities pursue every avenue to make sure that all businesses, old and new, can tap into the dynamism of their economic system.

### The vision

Boston should build on the educational, financial, and natural resources that provide the foundation for a dynamic, modern economy. The city should begin by strengthening its existing economic centers with improvements in transit and other infrastructure, streamlining permitting processes, and implementing an “edge” strategy that extends development from existing strongholds to underdeveloped areas via boulevards that connect the city center to the neighborhoods. By fostering connections between related and unrelated businesses to create a “critical mass,” the City can enable businesses to share support facilities, reduce their cost, and improve their convenience. The City should aggressively encourage new businesses to locate in Boston and to stay inside the city when they expand operations. All enterprises – public, private, and nonprofit – should have access to comprehensive, up-to-date information about real-estate and labor markets, new technologies, and the supply and demand of major industries.

### Assets and opportunities

Boston possesses **one of the most diverse, dynamic local economies** in the United States. Boston's economy is a collection of nine different clusters. Many of these clusters thrive on knowledge, while others thrive on Boston's quality as a physical environment. The knowledge clusters include health care, financial services, higher education, high technology, and manufacturing. The physical environment clusters include tourism, real estate, and environmental services. Government services is a cluster that straddles the line between these two major sets of clusters since it provides critical services and regulations, while at the same time leading the way in making investments in transportation, parks, schools and other public facilities, utilities, housing, and some research and production facilities. [see *SIDE economic clusters*]

Boston is **home to institutions that are vital to growth** in the modern economy. More than 130,000 students enroll in Boston's 32 colleges and universities every fall, 85,000 (64 percent) of whom live in the city. College and university students comprise one in seven residents of Boston. Overall, the Boston metropolitan area has 68 colleges and universities institutions of higher learning, enrolling 240,000 students. Boston's colleges and universities and their students spend an estimated \$3.1 billion a year and also bring skills, creativity, and promise in a broad range of



fields at many different levels. Boston is home to 27 inpatient hospitals, including Massachusetts General Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Beth Israel Hospital, Children's Hospital, New England Deaconess Hospital, the New England Medical Center, and Boston Medical Center. One of every seven jobs in the City is in health care – 88,025 at last count, in 1995. The medical industry contributes to the local economy not only with its impressive yearly operating expenses, but also through ambitious longterm investments. Between 1984 and 1993, hospitals and medical schools invested \$750 million in new facilities. From 1994 on, these institutions were expected to invest an additional \$980 million to upgrade clinical facilities. [see *SIDE MIT study*]

Boston also boasts a **strong public infrastructure** – including one of the nation's best transportation systems, world-renowned parks, a vibrant waterfront and port system, and hundreds of parcels convenient to employment centers available for housing and business development. In recent years, the City of Boston has initiated dozens of efforts to improve the comfort and attractiveness of the public realm. These efforts include Boston Main Streets, which has brought improvements to the appearance of 16 business districts across the city; the Boston Boulevards Initiative, which has produced plans to redesign nine major thoroughfares; the Boston Schoolyards Initiative, which has redesigned and landscaped 48 outdoors play areas in public schools; projects to improve Huntington Avenue and Blue Hill Avenue; and a number of efforts to improve public squares, such as Downtown Crossing and Hyde Square in Jamaica Plain.

## Barriers and challenges

The greatest challenge and opportunity comes from the **uneven economic development** across the city. Much business development is centered on the Downtown, even when that development could be extended to the neighborhoods with strong transportation connections to Downtown. The Institute for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) has found that neighborhoods such as Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan are underserved by retail outlets. Despite the lower incomes of residents in these areas, total sales are greater per square mile than in affluent suburbs because of greater density. Because of the shortage of retail outlets, inner-city consumers pay more than 20 percent more annually for clothing and up to 40 percent more on groceries than the average American shopper. Locating more stores in the inner city would provide greater choice, better prices, and more employment prospects. If retailers opened enough stores in inner-city neighborhoods to meet demand, ICIC concluded, they would create upwards of 300,000 new jobs. [see *SIDE ICIC*]

**Infrastructure** presents another important challenge. The public transit system provides a great foundation, but is in need of major improvements to serve the whole city and region and discourage the growing reliance on automobile transportation. The city's infrastructure also requires enhancements to streetscape and facilities to concentrate development at critical nodes of activity – to encourage transit use, reduce the costs of automobile travel, and provide a wide range of sustainable goods and services in all neighborhoods.

So far, the City has **no coherent effort to encourage firms to locate and stay in the city** from the beginning of the company's life-cycle. Business entrepreneurs decide where to locate their offices and production facilities at two critical stages of their development – the startup stage and the expansion stage. Providing information about locations within the city that could





provide adequate space, transit access, nearby housing, and shopping of products is absolutely critical to competing with suburban locations for business location.

The **permitting process** also poses problems for Boston's competitiveness. In his 1999 State of the City address, Mayor Thomas M. Menino expressed this frustration with the time required for develop or renovating buildings: "I will direct City departments to streamline the process for home renovations and new construction. I have personal experience with this – it took me six months to get a permit on my house – and I'm the mayor." Developers and businesses have complained that getting approval for projects takes months and even years longer than it does in other major cities. The documentation required for alternatives analyses, environmental studies, zoning requirements, structural requirements, and financial calculations can be daunting for even experienced developers.

One problem that cannot be solved directly is Boston's **expensive market for labor and land**. Despite the region's reputation for high wages, manufacturing workers in New England were paid an average hourly rate of \$13.67 in May 1998, comparable to the U.S. average of \$13.46 per hour, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Labor costs are significantly higher in skilled and unionized professions. Even in sectors where labor costs are significantly higher in Boston than elsewhere, Boston's skilled workforce and cutting-edge technologies make it a desirable place to do business in other industries. The challenge for Boston is to improve high education and training to accommodate the need for highly skilled workers.

## Actions

### The challenges for the city include . . .

- **Modernize the city's infrastructure.** With all of the attention and resources devoted to the Central Artery project, many experts are concerned that the Commonwealth and the City are devoting enough attention to other infrastructure projects. Longterm efforts are under way to modernize the city's water and sewer systems, and the Parks Department has undertaken major efforts to strengthen citywide and neighborhood parks and open spaces. The Boston Public Schools is developing plans to build or renovate virtually its whole stock of 117 school buildings, with expenditures in the billions of dollars. In addition, the Mayor's effort to connect all schools and libraries to a fiber-optic network has become a national model. But other efforts are needed to develop and maintain Boston's boulevards, neighborhood streets, civic squares, transit systems and stations, parks, and other elements of the built environment. [see *SIDE infrastructure thumbnails*]
- **Build incubators and partnerships all over the city.** To meet the challenge of attracting, nurturing, and retaining economic enterprises, many communities have developed "incubators" that provide facilities, assistance, and an environment where a dynamic process of discovery and growth can occur. As the name suggests, incubators help companies develop during their most vulnerable stages. Within the protective environment of a major warehouse or other facility, new firms can get below-market accounting, tax, management, and other expertise; access to equipment, ranging from office computers to manufacturing instruments; and an environment of creativity and mutuality, where companies exchange ideas about everything from how to find a good temp agency to how to design an office to how to solve difficult technical challenges. In 1999, the Boston Redevelopment Authority was planning a model incubator in South Boston's Marine Industrial Park. The Boston Technology Venture Center (BTVC) – a collaborative effort between the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston Edison, and the South



Boston Neighborhood Development Corporation – will provide space for energy technology companies with space and a wide range of services to assist ten local startup firms. That center could be the beginning of a whole network of startup incubators scattered throughout the city, in neighborhoods like Allston-Brighton, Dorchester, Roxbury, Mission Hill, and Mattapan. The City should develop partnerships to establish a complete network of incubators that offer job training, worker support programs (day care, health care, and so on), technical support for entrepreneurs, support services, facilities, and transportation and other infrastructure. [see *SIDE Crosstown*]

- **Promote ecologically sound development.** In the next generation, eco-industrial development offers great potential to build on cutting-edge research and businesses to improve neighborhoods, develop exports, provide jobs, and meet new standards for environmental protection. A number of states and municipalities have passed “smart growth” initiatives aimed at reducing unnecessary waste of time, land, and resources by fostering greater density and use of mass transit. The Clinton Administration has also identified sustainable development as a major priority for the next generation. The City of Boston should operate on three tracks to promote ecologically sound development:

- Design of the built environment to foster greater density, transit use, clustering related businesses, and other strategies to eliminate wasteful use of resources. Cooperative arrangements for professional services, warehousing, back-office needs, and equipment and facilities would provide critical assistance to ecologically sound firms.

- Targeted efforts to encourage businesses to adopt ecologically sound processes. Through such practices as “resource mapping” – identifying how inputs get processed in the production or distribution process – firms can develop new production methods that cut waste. A critical element of this is recovering waste products and converting them to useful materials that can be used for other products. Practices as simple as using electronic mail can reduce paper costs by as much as 40 percent.

- Support new businesses that provide ecologically sound products or services. One way is to buy products and services from “green” companies. Another is to provide logistical support to companies that use cutting-edge recycling technologies, production processes, and energy- and materials-saving capital equipment.

To promote eco-development, the City should provide tax and other incentives to businesses based on their adoption of production processes that use materials more efficiently. Working with the incubators project, they should identify parcels that would be most promising for location of production facilities of ecologically sound firms. The City should also continue its work to clean up brownfield sites and find tenants or buyers for usable sites. [see *MAP of priority brownfield sites*]

- **Offer assistance to firms at other critical phases of their life-cycle.** Businesses make critical location decisions at two points of their life-cycle. After the incubation and early development phases, the most important moment is the period of expansion. Because of its strategic location, strong highway access, availability of vacant parcels for development, convenient transit system, and access to technical and professional services, Boston should be a strong candidate for location of new and growing firms. The City should provide strong and persistent support for companies at this transitional stages of their development. The City should develop an extensive and updated database to provide information about possible plant locations, technical support and other assistance programs, and information about the permitting process.



This database should include comprehensive information about all of the potential sites for plant location, including data about other economic activities in the area, land and parcel conditions, local labor markets, nearby institutions, and transportation networks.

- **Streamline permitting and regulations for development, while requiring the highest standards for projects.** One of the greatest concerns of business people, as well as residents, is the time required to gain approval for development and other projects. The complexity of state environmental regulations, local zoning standards, historic preservation programs, the city's building code, parking and other transportation regulations, and legal liability over the use of properties – all increase the costs of building new developments and starting new businesses. Creating a streamlined, predictable, and clear set of standards – with an interactive database that includes all of these requirements on the Internet – would improve the business environment.

- **Provide comprehensive information systems for businesses and communities.** Boston's inability to capture its share of locally generated economic activity stems largely from inadequate information systems about demand for goods and services, parcels of land available for development, and government programs that provide incentives for businesses. Business schools and startup companies have testified that they do not have access to information about the business possibilities of Boston. The 1989 creation of the Office of Business Development in the Department of Neighborhood Services should improve the information and assistance that businesses get. Part of the Office's early agenda was to create a database of all office properties available for lease or purchase. That database should be expanded to include all parcels available for every variety of development. In addition, the City should undertake a study of the demand for a wide range of goods and services in the region to identify which industries might offer ripe opportunities for new business development or expansion in Boston. All of this information should be aggressively disseminated in regional newspapers, trade journals, trade associations and fairs, web sites, and financial institutions. [see SIDE Jim Howell analysis]

### **The challenges for institutions include . . .**

- **Focus development on critical corridors.** Building on the principles and model of the Mayor's Washington Street initiative, the City should work with private business associations to develop improvements in the major corridors that connect development areas with major employment centers. Such corridors would include the Urban Ring area (see above), Dorchester Avenue, Morrissey Boulevard, Blue Hill Avenue, Tremont Street, Columbus Avenue, and Commonwealth Avenue. Under this "edge" strategy, the areas of existing economic strength would be considered the cornerstones of future growth – and new growth opportunities would build from the edges of these areas outward. By providing some critical infrastructure enhancements – such as improvements to major thoroughfares and roads – the City can encourage economic strength to spread rather than to create undue pressure on real-estate prices in already strong areas.



## SUPPORTING INITIATIVE: REGIONAL TRAFFIC DESIGN TO PROTECT COMMUNITIES

Regional transportation systems such as Boston's require sophisticated management of street systems to provide efficient access for traffic to employment centers, government offices, and museums, stadiums, and other attractions. The regional system of traffic should protect neighborhoods from excessive burdens of congestion, noise, and pollution. The regional system should also intersect with mass transit in a way that encourages use of commuter lines for people traveling from the suburbs to the city for work or visits to cultural and sporting activities.

### The vision

In the next generation, the Boston region should develop a coordinated approach to traffic management that fosters economic and cultural activity while at the same time protecting the integrity of the city's neighborhoods. This strategy should include efforts to encourage use of Commuter and other public transit options and new systems of channeling traffic for efficient passage through the city that minimize negative neighborhood impacts. Working with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and other state and local bodies, develop cooperative arrangements to facilitate the efficient flow of traffic while discouraging unnecessary automobile use.

### Assets and opportunities

A number of **transit-improvement initiatives under way** promise to improve the city's regional transportation system. Boston's greatest transportation initiative is the Central Artery Project, which will replace an elevated interstate highway with an underground highway tunnel. The Artery will help to streamline traffic in the Downtown. Rather than clogging Downtown traffic with multiple exits, the new artery will create a system that channels traffic on and off the highway at strategic points. An increase in lanes from four to five will provide greater capacity. The opening of the Ted Williams Tunnel in 1995 also provides an important connection from the Seaport District to Logan Airport in East Boston.

The city has some **major crossroads** for business – ports, rail, airport – so there are more than one ways to get goods to market. The Seaport District plan, for example, provides a haul road designed to get cargo from the waterfront to the highways without disrupting the quality of life in the neighborhoods. This haul road is just the latest example of initiatives designed to move growing volumes of consumer products from produce to automobiles with modern systems of cargo handling. Other switching centers in Charlestown, Allston, East Boston and Logan Airport, and Dorchester provide the regional economy with the intermodal capacity it needs to compete in a global economy. [see *SIDE airport*]

The city and state authorities have also been planning for a greater use of **water transit**. The Massachusetts Port Authority and Boston Redevelopment Authority have been collaborating on the development of the *Boston Inner Harbor Passenger Water Transportation Plan*, which identifies existing and potential routes, docking areas, priorities for investment in facility development, and management and capital funding. Year-round commuter and other ferry system has the potential from its existing level of 1.3 million to 3.9 million riders. Seasonal excursions have the same potential to increase from 227,000 to 870,000 riders. More than 90





percent of these riders would be expected to pass through Downtown terminal from Long Wharf to Rowe's Wharf. East Boston, Charlestown, and especially the South Boston Waterfront have the greatest potential for increasing water transit. *[see MAP existing water transit routes]*

The city's Downtown **parking freeze** provides a foundation for a larger effort to restrict the volume of traffic, protect the fine-grained texture of Downtown's streetscape, and minimize air pollution and irritants caused by automobile exhaust. The freeze, imposed by the Commonwealth as part of its effort to implement the federal Clean Air Act, actually allows new spaces to be built as replacements for spaces that were previously eliminated. The freeze also applies only to lots and garages that charge fees for parking. New residential and commercial developments that do not assess user fees can build new parking spots and the MBTA is permitted to build park-and-ride spots. But however incomplete it may be, the freeze still encourages people to use public transit because of the inconvenience and expense associated with finding a spot Downtown.

To meet the growing demands of regional commuters, Boston has benefited from a number of **"transportation management associations"** which provide discounts on T passes and other assistance to workers who use mass transit. Major employers such as the Longwood Medical Area, Logan Airport, the universities, the Artery Business Committee, and the South Boston Seaport District all provide assistance to their members to buy passes for Commuter, subway, and bus systems. Such subsidies need to be complemented by restrictions on parking spaces at the workplace, use of company vehicles for family emergencies, and shuttle buses from transit stations to workplaces. If these systems were coordinated and assessed for their impact on city travel patterns, they could provide useful information about improvements to bus lines and other transit service.

The city also benefits from an **improved network of regional and commuter train service**. In 2000, Amtrak is scheduled to begin the use of high-speed trains, which travel at more than 150 miles per hour, to New York. Amtrak now carries nearly 1 million passengers annually between New York and Boston on 18 daily trains; by 2010, Amtrak expects to carry 4.3 million passengers on 34 daily trains. Ridership on the MBTA's regional rail system, once just 75,000 passengers daily, is expected to reach 160,000 passengers by 2020.

## Barriers and challenges

The **development and travel patterns of the metropolitan area** pose major challenges to the city. The Boston metropolitan area has become a galaxy of economic and residential centers, most of them connected only by automobile freeways rather than public transportation routes. Some 600,000 cars travel to Boston from outside communities every day. Much of this traffic is essential to the wellbeing of the city's economic, cultural, and recreational life. But there is no regional strategy for creating connections among the region's many centers. *[see MAP major thoroughfares]*

The City **lacks a structure to coordinate agencies** that work on major transportation planning. The complexity of transportation planning stems from the fact that so many federal, state, regional, and city agencies are involved in the process. At the moment, there is no coordinating structure to facilitate the exchange of basic information, maps and data, planning and development timelines, and government funding opportunities. *[see SIDE interagency complexity for streets]*

Boston also contains **two major business centers** – Downtown and the Longwood Medical and Academic Area – that pose difficulties in efforts to reduce automobile traffic. Access to both



of these areas by car is indirect, with poor connectors to highways and thoroughfares. Access to Downtown will be improved with improvements to the Central Artery, but the thoroughfares that feed into the Artery are ill-equipped to handle regional traffic demanded by Downtown. Storrow Drive is another major connector to Downtown, but congestion on this road is extreme during rush hours. The Longwood area is doubly burdened. It needs to serve the needs not only of its own workers and visitors, but also as a critical connection to the Downtown. The LMA is also served by Storrow Drive, as well as the Jamaicaway/Riverway corridor, Boylston Street, Tremont Street, and Columbus Avenue. Longwood workers account for about 32 percent of all of the area's volume of traffic; the roads in the Fenway and Mission Hill also serve regional traffic to other institutions in the area and to Downtown and other activity centers.

In recent years, the rate of automobile usage in Boston has grown at a rate of 2.5 percent annually. As noted above, automobile registration has almost doubled in the past generation – from 156,000 in 1970 to 303,226 in 1999. More than 600,000 cars come into Boston each day. As auto usage increases, commercial and residential buildings are designed for cars – what one community planning document calls “carchitecture.” This style of development isolates residents, small businesses, and pedestrians from street life, further undermining the potential of the city to provide vibrant urban villages – and makes residents and merchants even more dependent on cars. The dominance of the automobile requires a comprehensive response – from review of development projects to design of mass transit stations and nodes to allocation of streets for distinct purposes.

## **Actions**

### **The challenges for the state include . . .**

- **Create strategic transitways.** Boston contains many transit routes that would provide faster and more reliable transit service if buses and trolleys were not held up by unnecessary traffic congestion, parking and double-parking, and delivery vehicles. To enable transit vehicles to negotiate the roads more efficiently, Boston should designate a number of major roads as transitways. This designation would carry with it appropriate changes in the design of roads to accommodate transit vehicles, changes in the signaling systems to give preference to transit over cars and trucks, restrictions on parking, and restrictions on service and cargo deliveries. In addition to clearing transitways of automobile congestion, this initiative would require redesign of some nearby roads to assure that neighborhoods do not bear the brunt of rerouted traffic. Such redesign might include traffic-calming devices and one-way configurations that discourage through traffic in neighborhoods. Enforcement would be critical to the success of these transitways, so the establishment of a special strike force would be advisable as well.

- **Create new incentives for commuters and visitors to use Commuter lines.** As automobile use has increased for commuters, transportation planners should explore ways to encourage workers to use the MBTA's Commuter Lines. The City should focus on identifying possible new stops for existing Commuter lines, enhancing the design of existing stations, and improving shuttle and jitney service between stations and employment centers. In addition, Boston should work with suburban communities to develop parking facilities at Commuter Line stations in those communities. Such facilities might be connected to large-scale, mixed-use economic development projects that enhance the suburban communities and provide employment for city residents. Such projects require creative new partnerships to assure that the interests of all parties are protected.



**The challenges for the city include . . .**

- **Develop a street hierarchy that clarifies the relationship between regional and neighborhood traffic.** Bostonians regularly express confusion and frustration about how streets came to be designated as major thoroughfares. The current designation of streets is considered obsolete and can only be updated with a comprehensive evaluation of traffic patterns and transit service across the city and region. Neighborhood-level studies are inadequate to “sort out” the street hierarchy because the effects of channeling traffic along different routes creates consequences for nearby communities. Access Boston 2000-2010, the Boston Transportation Department’s citywide planning effort, should undertake a comprehensive assessment of the character of all streets in the city. The emphasis should be on identifying which streets should be designated as thoroughfares and transitways to encourage the proper channeling of regional traffic to serve the city’s overall circulation needs – while at the same time protecting the neighborhoods from excessive traffic impacts. [*see SIDE street hierarchy*]









## Logan International Airport

### A new airport is the answer

In the spring of 1999, Massport's proposal for a new runway at Logan Airport generated vigorous debate in Boston's communities. Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino argued that an additional ramp would not solve the problem of delays at the airport. In a Boston Herald article he wrote with State Senator Robert E. Travaglini, the Mayor argued that only a comprehensive plan for air traffic would address the needs of air travel and community development and protection. Here are excerpts from the article that appeared on March 16, 1999:

We don't need another runway at Logan Airport. What we really need is another major airport.

Massport says the new runway will increase the airport's flight capacity and expand the number of annual passengers from the current 26 million to more than 37 million by 2010. Forty-two percent more passengers means more cars and trucks and shuttle buses going to and from Logan. Imagine more cars on the Southeast Expressway and the Mass Pike during rush hours. More traffic in the tunnels and surrounding neighborhoods.

The frustration over delays getting to and from Logan has made airports in Providence, R.I., and Manchester, N.H., alternatives for personal travel. Thanks to Southwest Airlines, those two airports grew by more than 50 percent last year. But Logan kept growing anyway, because it is the only major airport serving Boston.

Without another major airport to serve the region's growing economy, the traffic at Logan (and the congestion and noise and delays) will only continue to expand. Adding a runway to ease flight traffic at Logan is like loosening your belt to cure a weight problem. It only creates more room for the problem to grow.

If the runway is approved, it won't be long before Logan reaches its new capacity and Massport finds itself in the same position it is in today: asking for another runway to handle even more traffic.

The Port Authority's greatest mistake is that it has failed to plan for growing demand for service throughout greater Boston. It is proposing a parochial solution to a regional problem.

Greater Washington, D.C., could never survive on the Ronald Reagan National Airport alone. It is too small. Like Logan, it remains a difficult airport for even the most seasoned pilots during foul weather. That region relies on two other major airports, Baltimore/Washington International and Dulles International in Virginia. Both are within 35 miles of downtown D.C.

Massachusetts has yet to plan for a future that includes another major airport.

Existing airports at the edge of our metropolitan area lack the infrastructure to serve our future. Hanscom Field in Bedford can handle small planes, but it needs improvements to handle cargo traffic, and Massport should pursue these options. Massport should also adopt peak pricing to shift flights to Providence and Manchester. But this is not enough.

Worcester Municipal Airport could become an attractive alternative, but only if the state constructs an access road between that airport and the Massachusetts Turnpike. Worcester is conveniently located in the center of the state, and near the Pike and Interstate 495, as well as rail connections to Boston and communities in between. The state should examine this option immediately.

More important, the state should conduct a study of a second major airport to serve the region after 2010. A similar study in the 1980s pointed to a 10,000-acre site for a potential



second airport at the decommissioned Fort Devens. Yet the study's recommendations were shelved for political reasons under then-Gov. William Weld.

Policy makers and businesses in Boston and along Interstate 495 need to cooperate in planning better transportation options. This issue extends to cities in New Hampshire and Rhode Island and even in Maine and southern Vermont. We need an interstate commission - call it a "New England Port Authority" - to provide the regional vision that is missing from Massport's parochialism.

Building another runway at Logan will only add more flights to an already crowded airport. Adding more flights will only add more vehicles to our already crowded roads. Increasing traffic will only diminish our quality of life. Take away our quality of life, and you take away people's reason for living and working here - and their reason for flying in and out of Logan in the first place.

We need smarter plans to serve the region's future and protect our quality of life. The last thing we need is another runway and more of the same congestion and delays.



## **Investing in Blue Hill Avenue**

When government officials and community leaders broke ground for a new Grove Hall Mall in the summer of 1999, it was just the latest major commitment to revive the Blue Hill Avenue corridor that has defined Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan for generations.

The mall, which received \$7.2 million in funds from the Enhanced Enterprise Community, will provide 50,000 square feet of retail space for an area whose retail needs are badly underserved.

The Menino Administration has made revival of the four-mile boulevard a top priority. The Blue Hill Avenue Task Force, chaired by architect David Lee, produced a comprehensive blueprint for reviving the area. The community-based plan, completed in 1996, calls for the redevelopment of Blue Hill Avenue in six separate redevelopment zones.

Before the area was badly damaged by riots in 1968 and middle-class flight in the 1960s and 1970s, it was a center for Jewish and African-American economic and social life.

Since 1994, the City has spent \$51 million on new sidewalks, streetlights, municipal parking lots, and more than 150 units of housing on side streets. During that period, 12 new businesses have set up shop in the area and 30 businesses have been renovated.

Most of the funds come from the Community Development Block Grant program administered by the Boston Department of Neighborhood Development.

In the Fall of 1998, the City opened a \$7.2-million Early Education Center for preschool and kindergarten at the corner of Blue Hill Avenue and Quincy Street. The Department of Neighborhood Development has made housing construction and rehabilitation a major priority in the area.

Another major initiative is RESTORE, a storefront renovation program which has improved the overall appearance of the area and gotten dozens of business people involved in giving the area a facelift. The Nation of Islam has played a major role in reviving the Grove Hall area with its development of Unity Plaza.

The Blue Hill Avenue revival is taking place at the same time as major efforts to revive nearby Dudley Square. The Dudley Town Common, a \$1-million park and community gathering place, was completed in 1995. The City and Commonwealth have been working to develop the old Ferdinand Department Store building.



## Crosstown

One of the most promising – and difficult – opportunities for economic development is a corridor known for years as “Crosstown.”

Crosstown is a two-square-mile area with 32,000 residents, over 800 businesses, and over 12,000 jobs. The area extends from the Longwood Medical Area on the west to Newmarket Square and Interstate 93 on the east. Inside this zone lie Northeastern University and the Wentworth Institute of Technology, Roxbury Community College, Dudley Square, and the Boston Medical Center.

Crosstown is notable for its extensive transportation network. Direct access to Interstates 93 and 90 and Route 1 is supplemented by an efficient matrix of city arteries such as Massachusetts Avenue, Tremont Street, Dorchester Avenue, Albany Street, and Dudley Street. Stations at Dudley and Ruggles anchor public transit, with over 60,000 daily bus trips and rapid transit and commuter lines service as well. <sup>(map)</sup>

Once an old-fashioned business and residential district – complete with neighborhood stores, factories and other workplaces, and churches and other community organizations – Crosstown has become a hodge-podge of businesses and institutions with little form or community character. Highway access and institutional expansion have squeezed out many residential blocks. Lax environmental regulations have attracted many polluting businesses. Previous attempts to generate economic activity have left behind shells of buildings.

One major challenge for Crosstown is to develop an urban design that accommodates the wide range of activities, takes advantage of highways and public transportation, and gives the area a sense of character. A second challenge is to use this community development to “capture” a greater share of the economic activity generated by hospitals, universities, and other major institutions.

Melnea Cass Boulevard, the looping road that connected Ruggles and Northeastern with the Boston Medical Center, could serve as the lynchpin for a comprehensive plan. With the development of a strong streetscape, the boulevard could create the kind of public realm that encourages people to walk about the whole district and take advantage of new restaurants, stores, recreational facilities, and transit stations. The streetscape design, ideally, would include wide sidewalks, buildings with attractive fronts and many points of entry, minimal setbacks, and engaging public art and amenities. The design would place less attractive facilities, such as parking garages and manufacturing facilities, behind the street-facing buildings.

Such a boulevard would give unity to a wide variety of economic activities – include manufacturing and assembly, storage facilities, wholesaling, retail outlets, movie theaters and gyms, health care centers, government offices, and social services. By creating a human-scale environment, the street would invite a constant buzz of activity.

Critical to any Crosstown plan is the development of a comprehensive transportation plan. The area's access to highways is central to its economic appeal. The Central Artery's connection to the Ted Williams Tunnel will soon bring Crosstown within minutes of Logan International Airport and South Boston Waterfront. But vehicular traffic should not overwhelm the community with congestion and air pollutants.

To minimize the negative impacts of street traffic, the Crosstown area needs enhanced public transit connections. Crosstown's inclusion in an Urban Ring would connect its job opportunities with neighborhoods throughout the region. New transit service, in turn, requires design that improves the pedestrian character of the half-mile radius around the station.





Another strategy to minimize congestion – and to make economic opportunity available to local residents – is the development of mixed housing nearby.

One of Crosstown's greatest challenges is capturing a greater share of economic activity generated by the universities and medical institutions. Longwood hospitals alone have an operating budget of \$630 million a year, but they procure few of their basic supplies and services from nearby businesses. The South Boston Waterfront – soon to be linked to Crosstown *by the MBTA's SilverLine* – generates \$8 billion in annual activity.

While developing the physical character of the area, the City also needs to spearhead efforts to link local businesses with institutional contractors. Such an effort requires a program to provide information to local vendors about the contracting opportunities at the institutions. Development of economic "incubators" – facilities that provide common services to startups – could also make the connection between institutions and local firms.

At the same time, the City needs to aggressively market Crosstown to a compelling mix of businesses. By providing improvements in basic infrastructure and public services, as well as special access to publicly owned parcels and buildings, public authorities can help to create the *critical mass* required for development of an economic dynamo.



## Downtown's pedestrian barriers

To make the Downtown more accessible and comfortable, the top priority has to be improving its pedestrian character. Although Boston is world-renowned as one of the most walkable cities in the world, Downtown poses a number of barriers. Addressing these barriers is essential to making Downtown accessible to residents and visitors.

Barriers for walking take five forms:

- ✓ **Traffic barriers.** At a number of critical places, walkers find it dangerous to walk or cross streets because of high volumes of traffic. Congress Street between City Hall and Faneuil Hall has long proved frustrating to pedestrians. Traffic is also a problem at several points along Cambridge Street, Causeway Street, Atlantic Avenue, and Kneeland Street.
- ✓ **Interrupted routes.** Often, walkers will orient themselves by walking on a main street only to find that the street is blocked by a major building or road.

Hanover Street, State Street, North Washington Street, Congress Street, and Commercial Street are all blocked by the Central Artery. The Artery's depression by 2003 will mend those gaps, but the surface street's design and development will be critical to developing a more continuous street system. The Government Center Garage blocks Congress Street and cuts off Government Center and Faneuil Hall from the Bulfinch Triangle and North Station areas.

- ✓ **Poor legibility.** Sometimes the street is physically continuous but is still difficult for the pedestrian to understand.

Kneeland Street – which stretches from the Greyhound bus facility near South Station to the State Transportation Building near Park Plaza – is confusing because of the poor mix of auto and pedestrian traffic. The South Station area suffers from the same poor car/pedestrian mix.

- ✓ **Intimidating or uninteresting streetscape.** It is a truism that sensual density of a street – how many sights, sounds, and smells a walker encounters along the way – determines the experience of walking along the street. A street filled with large warehouses and empty lots produces a feeling of isolation and makes a journey seem long. A longer street that offers interesting architecture, landscaping, and activity, by contrast, makes a walk seem short.

A number of streets near Downtown seem long because of the dull or repetitive streetscape. Congress Street suffers from the huge expanse of City Hall's north side. Cambridge Street suffers from a succession of large buildings surrounded by uninteresting plazas. Causeway Street is a mix of human-scale buildings and large structures that create blank walls along the street.

- ✓ **Poor wayfinding systems.** Boston is notorious among visitors for its poor signage. Visitors and even residents can be found Downtown slowly turning around trying to find a sign, map, or otherwise get oriented. In a district with such a high density of pedestrians, it is important to provide street signs on every corner and maps of the area at strategic nodes. The signs that exist should be accurate. Some signs at critical locations – such as the subway signs at State Street T station and outside the Government Center T stop – contain outdated information and only serve to confuse people.



## Downtown transit tied to neighborhood transit

Boston's transit system has long been oriented to getting residents, commuters, shoppers, and visitors into the Downtown core as quickly and efficiently as possible. The radial design of the system connects the city's hub with outlying areas like spokes on a wheel.

But the efficiency of the radial system increasingly depends on the quality of transit service outside the city's Downtown core. To improve service to high-volume stations like Park Street, South Station, North Station, and State Street, service to other destinations throughout the city need to be strengthened.

The increasing inefficiency of Boston's radial system stems from the in-and-out syndrome. Because of inadequate crosstown transit service, many riders must travel toward the major Downtown stations and then switch to other lines that take them out to their destinations. That means that many riders into the Downtown core do not want to go to the Downtown core, clogging the system for other riders.

The signs of stress are apparent on all major lines. The Green line, for example, is now at 92 percent capacity – 8 percent more than transit experts say is advisable for rider efficiency and comfort. Trains are so crowded during rush hour that transit authorities fear that discomfort might prompt some riders to seek alternative forms of transportation.

One answer to the problem of overcrowded radial transit routes is the development of better crosstown transit alternatives. If people in outlying neighborhoods could travel directly to nearby work, school, and shopping, they would not overburden inbound trains. They would also reach their destinations quicker, increasing the popularity of the T system and leading to a revival of the whole system.

Another proposals have been put forth to improve neighborhood transit service.

✓ **Improved bus service.** Residents in Roxbury, Dorchester, Hyde Park, and other communities have called for improving bus service that connect major centers of activity. Cross-town bus routes – connecting Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, and Hyde Park – could dramatically improve the mobility of Bostonians.

✓ **Transit line extensions.** Boston is one of the few cities in America to make major additions to its rail transit system in recent decades. The addition of the Orange Line in the 1980s, the new Silver Line expected to begin service in 2001, the proposed extensions of the Red and Blue lines, and the revival of the Old Colony Commuter Line are evidence of Boston's potential for reviving mass transit. New lines that run down Blue Hill Avenue and that connect Forest Hills with Columbia Point would provide critical connections to underserved parts of Boston like Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan.

✓ **The Urban Ring.** To create better connections between Boston's radial transit and commuter lines, planners have explored how to install an "urban ring" that provides circumferential transit for Boston and five other communities. The urban ring would provide transit service connecting Boston communities with Chelsea, Everett, Somerville, Cambridge, and Brookline. The ring would enable travelers to make connections to nearby communities without first coming into the Downtown and switching lines – freeing radial lines for Downtown passengers.



One of the greatest challenges is how to absorb all of these students. The percentages of students in the neighborhood ranges from a low of 6 percent in East Boston to a high of 63 percent in Fenway-Kenmore. Many neighborhoods with high concentrations of students, like Fenway-Kenmore and Allston-Brighton, struggle to deal with the noise and instability of transient populations. Students sharing small apartments artificially inflates local rents. Only 21 percent of students live in dormitories. At the same time, students contribute to stability because they are in the neighborhood at all hours of day and night. Students also contribute to the part-time labor market and also work as interns and volunteers for a variety of public, private, and nonprofit institutions.

**High Technology.** Outside of California's Silicon Valley, Boston is the nation's premier setting for high technology. The collection of universities, medical and research institutions, and diverse technology companies makes Greater Boston a fertile place for the creation, development, and marketing of new ideas and products.

Boston faces an increasingly competitive environment in technology and research. According to the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce's Leading Industries Report: "Twenty years ago, Boston had few competitors in the field of commercialized research. Cities around the world began studying our success and set out to emulate it. Partnerships between universities and surrounding companies ensued. As a result, companies that want to locate near technology transfer universities can now find them around the country." (LIR 5)

The information technology industry demonstrates the necessity of change in the modern economy. The minicomputer industry, led by Digital Equipment Corporation and the Wang Corporation, once provided the impetus for prosperity on Route 128 and inward. The proliferation of desktop and portable computers and the development of powerful chips devastated the Boston area's information technology industry. Companies like DEC and Wang announced budget cutbacks in the billions and layoffs in the thousands. But the existence of a strong technical community, characterized by close internal linkages, helped spur a new wave of growth and development as the century drew to a close. Software has been a linchpin of the revived information technology sector.

The demands of technological innovation pose opportunities and challenges for Boston. When Sun Microsystems recently announced a decision to build a 1,580-acre, 1.3-million-square-foot complex in Chelmsford, the company's chairman cited the importance of the creative environment as a major motivation. Not only is the site close to Boston and Cambridge, but the construction of a new campus will create a place where employees can benefit from the swirl of ideas: "With the kind of growth rates we're on, we need to get them on a campus where we can legislate interaction. When everybody's in different locations, you don't get the kind of lunchroom and hallway crosstalk that is so valuable in the fast-growth, Internet-time kind of environment we're in." (Joann Muller, "Sun's Leader: Region's Talent Led to Firm's Expansion Here." The Boston Globe, August 28, 1997). Boston's challenge is to find the space to accommodate growth firms and also convince the firms that the City's close-knit and diverse environment offers more dynamism than any separate campus could ever offer.

Environmental technology concentrates hundreds of firms and tens of thousands of workers in Massachusetts. Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter writes: "Massachusetts has relatively rigorous environmental standards compared with other parts of the nation. . . . To accommodate those regulations, firms have been forced to innovate and acquire particular expertise. As other regions of the country and the world strengthen their own environmental controls, Massachusetts firms have the necessary products and expertise already developed and ready for export." (Porter 110). The City's location on the Boston Harbor and five riverways, the challenges of brownfields, and the region's challenges of managing growth offer unique environmental opportunities.





Experts disagree about Boston's future in the high technology cluster. Ruthann Quindlen, a venture capitalist, sees Boston in decline. "If you look at the numbers, Silicon Valley is outstripping Boston," she said. "The center of gravity is moving increasingly to Silicon Valley. It's shocking, the amount of deals done here [in California] as compared to there. Boston is definitely moving down." Patrick J. McGovern, the Chairman of International Data Group disagrees. He says that Boston's stable business culture enables companies to keep employees and the region to keep companies. "In Silicon valley, leaving to form a new company is considered heroic rather than disloyal, and personnel turnover rates are often in excess of 20 percent," he said. "To acquire greater personnel stability is one of the reasons companies founded in Northern California expand operations to Texas, the Mountain Region, the Northwest, and Boston." (ASAP, 8/25/97) The goal for Boston is building a community that is dynamic but also stable.

**Financial Services.** Financial services provides the lubrication for the rest of the economy. Banking, insurance, venture capital, securities and commodities, and pension funds provide the means for developing and sustaining the modern economy. These industries also provide high-paying jobs and foster a creativity and complexity essential to the modern economy. The legal, accounting, consulting, computers and software, and research and publishing industries also rely on a strong financial sector.

Boston's financial services cluster accounts for over 47,000 jobs with a payroll of \$3.2 billion and state income taxes of \$155 million. While one-third of the cluster's jobs in 1995 could be characterized as managerial, professional, or technical, some 60 percent of the jobs are clerical or service positions.

The end of the century has found financial institutions at a mature stage of development. The collapse of the New England economy left banks holding billions of dollars worth of nonperforming loans. The financial crisis of the early 1990s led to a major shakeout of the industry. A series of mergers and acquisitions – resulting last year in one of the nation's largest banks, Fleet Boston, has positioned Boston to compete internationally.

The segments of the financial sector experience ups and downs at different times. While the banking and insurance industries suffered in the early 1990s, the securities and mutual funds industry grew impressively. As banking and insurance have prospered in recent years, experts worry that the securities and mutual funds bubble may burst. Fidelity Investments, the nation's leading mutual investment firm, employed some 6,649 persons as the decade neared a close.

Dense clustering is valued in the financial cluster because it provides invaluable face-to-face contact and access to cutting-edge information that is only possible in an intense, close-knit working environment. The financial services cluster also benefits from proximity to related service industries, the training capacity and intellectual influence of institutions of higher learning, and a tradition of financial leadership in New England. Another advantage is the City's high quality of life. Professionals and their families value the region's cultural attractions and convenient location to recreational pursuits.

At a time of intense interstate competition for the economic benefits of financial services firms, however, other factors also influence the cluster's longterm future in Boston. "With the advent of deregulation, increased competition among states to attract new industry and jobs, and the globalization of the economy, Massachusetts needs to compete more aggressively with other states to retain its strong financial services sector." (LIR, p. 6). Tax and regulatory laws, real-estate prices, and access to an adequate labor supply all could determine whether Boston's financial services cluster stays put or moves to the suburbs and beyond. One very physical constraint for this cluster is the shortage of Grade A office, which could encourage firms to relocate nearby (e.g., South Boston) or farther away (the suburbs and beyond).



The lines that separate different kinds of financial services have become increasingly blurred. Banking, insurance, and investment banking firms have moved outside their traditional realms to offer new financial services and products. Federal court and administrative rulings have allowed banks to move into other businesses like insurance in recent years. Experts predict that such consolidation will lead to a new wave of mergers and reorganizations that could again change Boston's context for investment and development.

**Tourism and Visitors.** In an era that celebrates the climate and lifestyle of the Sunbelt, Boston has become one of the nation's premier tourism and convention sites. The Boston metropolitan area attracts upwards of 10 million visitors a year, who spend approximately \$8 billion a year for hotel accommodations, food, entertainment, shopping, transportation, and other services. Boston is an international draw because of its historic sites and districts, fine-grained neighborhoods, diverse educational and social institutions, comfortable pedestrian spaces and convenient transit system, access to awe-inspiring natural phenomena, and position as the "hub" of New England.

Boston's attractiveness as a tourist site stems from its old-fashioned urban character. The American Institute of Architects *Guide to Boston* notes: "Boston's most significant achievement in this century may have been in urban design and planning, in integrating new architecture with the past and at the same time maintaining an emphasis on human scale. More than any other American city, Boston has retained or adapted its physical past while allowing new landmarks to take root." (x-xi).

Over 70 percent of all visitors come to Boston for business. The number of conventions requiring 2,000 or more hotel rooms increased from 12 to 15 from 1995 to 1996, and 18 were scheduled for 1997 at the beginning of the year. Hotel occupancy rates reached 80 percent in 1996, the highest level in 20 years. Higher rates of occupancy translated into higher rates. Boston's hotel occupancy reached a rate of 90.7 percent in 1977, with an average room rate of \$177.39, according to the Pinnacle Advisory Group. (BBJ 8/29/97).

Boston also has become the host of a number of special events. The Boston Marathon has become an international attraction; the April 1996 centennial marathon attracted 38,708 runners and an estimated 750,000 spectators to Boston. Other special events in recent years include the sailing of the U.S.S. Constitution in 1997, the World Cup soccer championship in 1994, the 1992 Sail Boston (which attracted 6 million visitors and accounted for direct spending of \$315 million).

**Real Estate and Construction.** Boston is one of the smallest "big cities" in America, a densely packed 48 square miles hemmed in by water and a diverse collection of independent suburban communities. Because Boston is so small geographically and contains a mature built environment, the City competes with low-cost suburban locales for the development of office, production, and distribution facilities.

Real estate is one of the industries most prone to the cycles of boom and bust. Because real estate requires longterm financing from banks and other institutions, it also affects the health of the financial sectors. Large projects often require major improvements in infrastructure, so government involvement is also a vital component to the health of this cluster.

At the turn of the century, the construction industry in Boston is booming. One measure of the construction industry's strength is receipts from building permits. Permit revenues hit a low of \$6.7 million in fiscal year 1991, but rose steadily to \$11.8 million in fiscal year 1996. This latter figure can be used to estimate construction activity of approximately \$1.4 billion for that year.

Development activity in 1996 included construction of four new hotels <sup>for a total of</sup> with 800 rooms, several major new retail outlets downtown (including Niketown, Borders Books, Marshall's, Loehmann's, and Tello's), seven new supermarkets throughout the city, and both affordable and



market-rate housing complexes totaling 800 new units. In 1997, the City announced the sale and development plans for the Registry building by Northeastern University and plans for a \$300-million mixed use development on Washington Street headed by New York-based Millennium developers.

Vacancy rates and sale prices of houses, condominiums, and apartment buildings also underscore the real estate industry's strength. When college students arrived in Boston before the 1997-98 academic year, they found that vacancy rates had plummeted to 1.47 percent in the City and much lower in traditional student enclaves. vacancy rates were 0.77 percent in the Fenway and Longwood areas, 1.22 percent in Allston-Brighton, 2.05 percent in back Bay, and 0.31 in Beacon Hill and the West End. The vacancy rates were 1.26 in Brookline and 0.56 in Cambridge. (Peter S. Canellos, "Students Returning to a Rental Nightmare," *The Boston Globe*, August 27, 1997). After real estate prices rose to historic levels in the booms years of the late 1980s, they plummeted afterwards. Only in the late 1990s have prices recovered.

Demands for housing differ according to the neighborhood and demographic group. One indicator of different housing needs is the poverty rates in the different neighborhoods. Poverty rates in 1989 ranged from a low of 5 percent in West Roxbury to a high of 30.1 percent in Roxbury. Other neighborhoods with substantial poverty rates include Dorchester (22.6), the South End (22.3), East Boston (19.3), South Boston (17.3) and Mattapan (17.0). The percentages for Back Bay-Fenway (26.6) and Allston-Brighton (20.1) were inflated by the large numbers of college students. (Poverty Developments..., p. 17). These neighborhoods exhibit considerable diversity. <MORE>

**The Public Sector.** Governments spend \$XX billion and employ 84,290 people in Boston; Boston residents hold about half of these positions. Government services include police and fire protection, public administration, planning and development, environmental protection, parks and other amenities, public transportation, infrastructure, and facilities development and management. Another 21,000 people are employed in utilities (gas and electric services, sanitary services) and quasi-governmental services (telephone, transportation).

The most obvious way that government shapes city space is with its physical construction and maintenance. Federal and state buildings operate outside the zoning and design standards set by the BRA. Structures such as the Kennedy and O'Neill federal buildings and the new federal courthouse do not meet basic criteria for fitting into the urban fabric and allowing public access.

Boston's strategies for wiring the City for information technologies could have important consequences for Boston's built environment. Even though technology is usually considered a phenomenon that reduces the importance of place, it could help to foster new nodes of activity. Plans to wire all of the City's schools, for example, could help make school buildings centers of their neighborhoods and strengthen other neighborhood networks. Information is a major concern when other projects are undertaken. When the Orange Line was constructed at Ruggles Center, adequate conduit space was left for future communications laying cable in the future.

**Manufacturing.** Despite the decline of manufacturing in Boston and other big cities, it still provides 28,000 jobs in Boston. Manufacturing sectors include printing and publishing, fabricated metals, food, apparel and other textile products, instruments and electronic components. Major employers include Gillette (razors and other bathroom products); Houghton Mifflin and Little, Brown (publishing); Connell Ltd. Partnership (machine tools); and Teradyne (automatic test systems). Emerging areas of manufacturing include biotechnology, computer-oriented equipment, and medical supplies.

Even manufacturing sectors that are strong seem vulnerable. Computer sales could flatten as business and home desktop markets become saturated. Even though two-thirds of all American homes do not have computers, penetrating those homes will prove more difficult than the first



third. Units selling for below \$1,000, as well as specialized units offering single-functions like word-processing or Internet access, could be the growth areas in this cluster.

Manufacturing executives in Boston stress the higher costs of manufacturing in Boston because of labor costs, land acquisition, taxes, regulation, and other factors. But Boston's density provides advantages, too. Richard J. Egan of the EMC Corporation states: "The cost disadvantages are weighed against the ability to communicate in a business like ours in which you're on a very fast product development cycle. The intimacy between the design engineers and manufacturing has to be very close, very quick. I guess we kind of come down on the side that it's easier to keep them together and pay the additional costs."

Manufacturing provides some of the best jobs for workers with little formal education, especially women. Of the women working in durable goods manufacturing in 1990, more than 50 percent had not advanced beyond high school; only about one-third of the women working in other sectors had not advanced beyond high school. Manufacturing also plays a pivotal role in the state's research and development activities. Manufacturing firms provide about 54 percent of all R and D funds in the state, outdistancing the Federal government, which provides 34 percent of all R and D funds. (Richard Lester, Andrew Bernard, Frank Levy, and Micky Tripathi, "Tough Questions for Massachusetts," 1995 unpublished paper.)





## Historic downtown

Boston's Downtown tells two stories that are vital for understanding the city's history – and developing plans to enhance its overall character and function.

The first story focuses on the Shawmut Peninsula, the spit of land the colonists found when they ventured into the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the early 1600s. The peninsula was connected to the mainland by a narrow neck, which eventually became Washington Street and extends out to the farthest edge of the city in West Roxbury.

From the very beginning, the Shawmut Peninsula was changed to meet the needs of commerce, commuting, and public safety. Wharves were built to form the edges of what we know today at the North End and Waterfront and the Financial District. The Mill Pond – located inside today's Prince Street, Haymarket, Suffolk County Courthouse, and Causeway Street – was filled in 1804. Two of the three hills that first greeted newcomers (Mount Vernon and Beacon Hill) were reduced in 1811; a third (Pemberton Hill) was leveled in 1835. The nearby Back Bay, just west of the Boston Common, was filled in the late 1800s.

Inside the changes to the Shawmut Peninsula's natural composition was the physical construction of one of the densest areas in urban America. Radial transportation systems – highways, transit, commuter rails, Amtrak, cargo lines – have reinforced the peninsula's position as the employment and cultural center of New England. The retention of old buildings and the construction of new skyscrapers assure a 24-hours presence. Today's Downtown is the nation's fifth largest employment center and is bounded by such tight-knit neighborhoods as the North End, Beacon Hill, Chinatown, and the South End.

The challenge for Boston planners is to retain its historic character while at the same time taking full advantage of the needs of modern business and society.

The historic character of Downtown should be construed broadly. The colonial legacy of the Downtown is vital to its identity. But at the same time, it is important to recognize and enhance the historic elements that have accompanied the long evolution of Boston from the 1600s to the decades of 2000.

The enhancements of historic Downtown should focus on the following elements:

- **The colonial era.** One of the greatest challenges is the restoration of Creek Square, the oldest public space in Boston. Located ~~behind~~ near Haymarket on the crossroads from Government Center to the North End, Creek Square is now occupied by trash dumpsters and lacks any character or amenities. Cleaning up this historic site and providing benches and interpretive signs should be a top priority for Downtown improvements. North Square is another critical space. A number of other colonial spaces – such as Old North Church and the Paul Revere house – are in good shape but could be improved with better access and definition of nearby spaces.

- **Classic buildings and civic spaces.** The state and city already do a good job highlighting the importance of the State House, the old State House, the old City Hall, and Copps Hill Burial Grounds. Whole neighborhoods like Beacon Hill and the North End are in good shape overall.

Other sites require design improvements. The Blackstone block, located near Creek Square, played an important role connecting pieces of the emerging Downtown in the 1700s and 1800s. Haymarket today provides a lively outdoors market. The city's historic transportation system – including North and South Stations and the major T stations – should also be enhanced. These stations define the possibilities for public spaces nearby.



The Bulfinch Triangle – defined by Merrimac, Causeway, and Washington streets – should be a major site for public realm improvements. This area has been badly damaged by the Central Artery, Government Center Garage, and poor traffic patterns. But the redevelopment of Causeway Street – with conversions of old buildings and development of new structures as well – offers a great opportunity to strengthen its business character. The depression of the Central Artery will offer great new sites for development. Over the long term, replacement of the garage should be considered as a way to revive the area's pedestrian character.

- **The waterfront.** Boston's wharves have long defined the waterfront, and recent efforts to build a pedestrian Harborwalk will open these spaces once again to the public. The major goal of all development should be public access to the waterfront.

- **Portals of immigration.** After New York, Boston has long served as the major point of entry for the 55 million immigrants who have come to the U.S. from Ireland, Italy, Russia, China, Southeast Asia, and other countries. Boston's major settling places include the North End, South Boston, and Chinatown. Boston can take a number of steps to commemorate this critical period in the nation's and city's history. The new immigration museum at Milk Street in Downtown Crossing – on the site where Benjamin Franklin was born – provides a major new opportunity to interpret immigrants from the city's beginning to the present. But the neighborhoods should also establish interpretive signs and exhibits to make immigration come alive all over the Downtown and city.

- **The buildings of modernism.** Boston's history now includes what we know as the Modernist era. Internationally, Boston is known for its neo-brutalist City Hall building, which <sup>?</sup> The West End is now occupied by skyscrapers at Charles River Park, itself a major watershed in the city's history. Both City Hall and Charles River Park can be intimidating places for visitors to visit. Gateways, landscaping improvements, and the development of pedestrian paths and amenities would make these spaces more accessible, providing for their continued use and exploration by Bostonians and visitors.

- **Repairs to Downtown's fabric.** The Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project – known as the "Big Dig" – is the largest public works project in the U.S. today. The replacement of the Central Artery with a tunnel and surface parks and development offers great new opportunities to reconnect the waterfront with the rest of Boston. At the same time, it would be appropriate to commemorate the Central Artery as emblematic of the highway era that has transformed urban America in the last century.

---



## Institute for a Competitive Inner City

When President Bill Clinton toured poor communities in cities and rural areas in the summer of 1999, he was highlighting a new development in American economic development.

That development finds its genesis in Boston and three other American cities, where retail and other businesses have rediscovered the market power of the inner city. After years of movement from inner-city communities to the suburbs, large grocers, retailers, and other businesses have rediscovered that the cities offer the most concentrated and lucrative markets in the nation.

One of the leading forces in the back-to-the-city movement is the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, founded in 1994 by Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter. Working with PriceWaterhouseCoopers accounting firm, ICIC estimates that inner-city consumers nationwide spend \$85 billion on retail purchases annually – about 7 percent of all retail spending. Because of the greater density of the inner city, the poorest square mile of Boston has greater spending power than comparable areas in affluent suburbs like Wellesley.

The proximity of low-income neighborhoods to the Downtown provide a good setting for back-office, distribution facilities, light manufacturing, and a wide range of other support services for the city's booming financial sector.

Boston's core – which includes the South End, Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan and parts of Jamaica Plain -- has a population of 260,000 and a work force of 172,000. Even though the area's median household income is only half as great as the whole metropolitan area and its unemployment and poverty rates are twice as great as the metropolitan area, its spending power is impressive.

To tap this market requires not only high-profile campaigns to bring large retailers back to the city, but also efforts to secure a fair share of contracts for the Central Artery and other major construction projects. At the same time, the city needs to provide better education and job training so residents possess the skills needed to fill the jobs provided by the booming economy.

One of the enduring problems of poor neighborhoods is the lack of competition among retailers for customers. When residents are forced to accept the goods and services of a few firms, they pay higher prices than residents of more competitive communities. Perhaps even more important, firms in less competitive areas do not innovate or develop new products or services.

---

384 words

G:\BOS\_400\chapters\sidebars\4 - hub sides\SIDE ICIC .doc



## **Upgrading Boston's infrastructure**

Just about everywhere you turn in Boston these days you see evidence of construction: cranes downtown near North Station, construction crews at the former Boston State Hospital grounds in Mattapan, road crews all over Dorchester, and those Central Artery blue and yellow barriers are seemingly everywhere. Boston is doing a lot of building above ground, but maybe even more underground.

For every utility service that you have at your home or office – water, electricity, natural gas, telephone, and even internet service – there are hundreds of miles of pipes or conduits underneath the streets of the city. Our water, just to take an example, comes from the Quabbin Reservoir, 83 miles away in western Massachusetts. To reach Boston, it travels through an extensive network of reservoirs, aqueducts, and water pipes – all of which are maintained by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) or individual municipal water departments.

The Boston Water and Sewer Commission has undertaken a program to replace 17 miles of pipe in the City of Boston each year until the year 2010 – and then replace or reline approximately 12 miles or one percent of the system each year after 2010. This kind of maintenance will allow the Commission to effectively replace the system every 100 years which is the approximate life span of a water pipe.

Other infrastructure upgrades are also underway. In conjunction with the Central Artery/Tunnel project, the “central nervous system” of the downtown will be completely rebuilt to make way for the depressed portion of Interstate 93. Two parallel utility corridors will contain new water lines, sewer lines, storm drains, fiber optic cables, electricity conduits, cable television wires, gas lines, and steam lines. The construction activity necessary to relocate all of the utilities in the downtown core of the city has given each of the owners an opportunity to overhaul their utility systems. The result will be a system that comprises 25,000 miles of fiber optics,

Even the Boston Public School Department is participating in upgrading utilities. The School Department is in the process of wiring all of its 129 school buildings with a 21st century voice, video, and data network that will afford the City's students access to the technology that is now revolutionizing our economy.





## **The complexity of interagency involvement in the streets**

Cooperation among several federal, state, and local agencies is essential to produce pedestrian improvements on Boston's streets. The following graphic shows some of the local agencies involved in streetscape design.

In addition, the Federal Highway Administration, Massachusetts Highway Department, and Metropolitan District Commission hold jurisdiction over many streets of the city. Different agencies also bear responsibility for lighting, buildings on the street, park spaces near the street, and historic buildings and districts.

<Insert graphic from p. 10 of Streetscape Guidelines for Boston's Major Roads>



## ISTEA and TEA-21

Under a federal program that allows states and localities greater flexibility in their use of highway funds, Boston and other cities have embarked on a number of projects that enhance public transit and create pedestrian and bicycle routes, and promote environmental protection.

Congressional passage of the 1999 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) authorizes \$217 billion for transportation projects. Up to half of that money may be spent on new bike paths and other non-traditional transportation projects.

The purpose of TEA-21 – and its predecessor legislation, the Inter-modal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act, or ISTE A – is to encourage communities to invest in transportation projects that strengthen the overall quality of life in the community. The legislation is an attempt to counteract the destructive impact that highway projects can have on community life.

TEA-21 supports the kind of transportation and community development envisioned in Boston 400's transit-centered urban villages initiative. Cities can apply for federal funds for specific projects that provide alternative modes of transportation. Projects that take advantage of existing public-transit facilities are given preference to other projects. So are projects that can demonstrate wide public support.

Under the Boston 400 initiative, communities are encouraged to provide clusters of goods, services, and other public amenities within walking distance of homes and workplaces. Communities also are encouraged to design their streets and public spaces to make these areas more attractive and comfortable. By locating these mixed-use areas near transit stations, more people will be encouraged to take the T rather than relying on cars.

One TEA-21 program, called the Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot (TCSP) grant program will provide \$120 million to fund projects that link transportation and land use decisions with community quality of life.

Boston already has benefited from ISTE A on several neighborhood projects. The Boston Transportation Department recently received a \$50,000 TEA-21 grant to study the possibility of building the South Bay Harbortrail bicycle path that would lead riders from Ruggles Station in Roxbury to the Fort Point Channel at the South Boston Waterfront. The project was championed by the Campaign for the Water's Edge, a coalition of non-profit organizations; and supported by a City agency.

Another ISTE A project in Boston is the construction of bicycle paths from the Back Bay Fens to Huntington Avenue. That project was done in a collaborative effort of the Boston Parks and Transportation departments.

Transportation programs are generally relevant only to physical projects, but TEA-21 goes beyond construction and maintenance to fuel conservation and clean fuels for transit vehicles. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has an opportunity to take advantage of grants available to reduce diesel engine emissions by utilizing alternative fuel vehicles. The MBTA has already adopted these alternate-fuel buses for two major routes.

The TEA-21 legislation is a real tool for cities like Boston that want to maintain their walkable, human-scale environment while protecting the environment and improving quality of life for city residents.

The following is a breakdown of funds available for TEA-21 communities:

Kind of investments	ISTEA	TEA-21	Difference
---------------------	-------	--------	------------



<b>Money earmarked specifically for new highways</b>	\$13 billion	\$8 billion	\$ -5 billion
<b>Money That May Not Be Used to Build New Highways</b> (bridge and Interstate maintenance, transportation enhancements, safety, congestion mitigation and air quality efforts)	\$74 billion	\$111 billion	\$37 billion
<b>Flexible Money</b> (surface transportation program, "equity" categories)	\$68 billion	\$97 billion	\$29 billion
<b>Totals</b>	\$156 billion	\$216 billion	\$61 billion

G:\BOS\_400\chapters\sidebars\4 - hub sides\SIDE ISTE TEA-21.doc



## Building a more inclusive 'support economy'

Local economies have two major pieces – the export economy and the support economy. In the export economy, which comprises one-third of the local activity, businesses add to the city's overall wealth by selling goods and services to customers outside the city. In the support economy, which comprises the other two-thirds, businesses supply the goods and services of everyday life. Such goods and services range from groceries to clothing to dry cleaning to office supplies.

Economic development policy-makers usually emphasize the importance of the export economy. Export industries not only bring dollars from outside the city, but also supply jobs for local workers. Purchases by buyers outside the city, in effect, help to employ workers within the city. In Boston, some examples of major exports include razor blades, mutual funds, convention events, and fish-processing.

With a vibrant airport, strong ports, and extensive highway and transit systems, Boston is well-positioned to trade with other economies – in Massachusetts and beyond. A survey by the National League of Cities identified Boston as one of the seven most innovative localities in the U.S. for economic change. Boston exported some \$7.09 billion in merchandise in 1994. Those products included industrial machinery and computers (\$1.91 billion), electric and electronic equipment (\$1.49 billion), scientific and measuring instruments (\$1.45 billion), chemical products (\$424 million), rubber and plastic products (\$368 million), and fabricated metal products (\$266 million). (*BBJ*, p. 38)

Many economic development specialists have downplayed the importance of support industries, saying that they are a "zero-sum game" since people are simply exchanging local dollars for local goods and services.

But according to a study by James Howell and Linda Frankel, many city businesses and residents import goods and services that could be provided locally – and so the city loses important economic opportunities.

Howell and Frankel analyzed more than 600 businesses in 20 cities of all sizes and economic compositions. They found that, after controlling for population, all cities need the same number of locksmiths, wooden crate producers, auto glass dealers, lumber wholesalers, gifts and novelty wholesalers, tobacco wholesalers, greeting card stores, handbag stores, retail nurseries, lunch wagons, and more than 600 other unglamorous but essential providers of goods and services.

Comparing the expected and actual number of suppliers in each of these businesses, Howell and Frankel found that in most cities roughly 10 to 15 percent of these businesses are undersupplied. Howell and Frankel write: "Those [goods and services] which are undersupplied represent opportunities for new business entrants as well as possibilities for expansion among existing firms, in order to take over market share from outside firms exporting into the local market area." (3).

One challenge for Boston in the new century is to identify which support-economy businesses are undersupplied in Boston. Boston could contain anywhere from 60 to 90 specific businesses that are undersupplied – and therefore offer great opportunities for entrepreneurs and workers.





## Legibility and great urban spaces

*For a space to be meaningful and for people to develop connections to it, a number of fundamental requirements must be met. First, it must be "legible," to borrow the term from Kevin Lynch's analysis. In order for a space to be legible, particularly in the case of public areas, it must have recognizable cues that are understood by potential users, cues that communicate what kind of place it is and whether they are welcome. This is a place that would invite the eye and ear to greater attention and participation, [to use the words of Lynch]. Although every setting does not invite all passersby, it should be expected to attract some. . . . Legibility is the ability of a place to communicate first that it is open to the user and then what is possible there, once the user is inside. In order for people to see some positive meaning in a place it must resonate with their lives and evoke patterns of use that create bonds with the space. If people see possibilities and share goals with others, their connection to that place will be enhanced. . . . If it operates at a higher level, the site will also be an evocative one, a place that resounds with the memories and experiences of an individual, a family, a group, or a culture in ways that connect each one to a larger entity, a group memory, or an experience.*

— Stephen Carr, et al., *Public Space*, pp. 187-90



## Generating and Keeping Jobs

In 1997, BankBoston released a report that poses a great challenge to the City's economic policy for the next generation. The report – entitled *MIT: The Impact of Innovation* – details the powerful impact of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on the American economy by spurring the creation of thousands of new companies across the United States. It also points out that less than one-quarter of those firms are located in Massachusetts, and even the firms that do locate in the state locate many of their jobs out of the state. The challenge to Boston 400 is how to encourage more entrepreneurs from MIT and other institutions to locate in Boston.

The report provides powerful numbers on MIT's impact on the national economy. Some 4,000 companies founded by MIT faculty or graduates employ 1.1 million people and record sales of \$232 billion a year. If MIT companies were a country, they would have the 24th largest economy in the world, ranking somewhere between South Africa and Thailand. The states with the greatest MIT impact are California (162,000 jobs), Massachusetts (125,000 jobs), and Texas (84,000 jobs).

Some 150 new firms are created each year in software, electronics, biotechnology, and other growth industries. "These companies have a disproportionate importance to the local economies because they usually sell to out-of-state and world markets," which brings outside dollars into the city. (p. 5). The two greatest challenges new firms face, according to the study, are access to startup funding and meeting government regulations. (p. 11).

Besides financing and regulations, all growing companies face the challenge of finding good locations for their operations. Finding manufacturing, warehouse, and shipping facilities is especially critical to manufacturing firms. Some 57 percent of the MIT-related Massachusetts firms told survey researchers that they were planning expansions in the near future. (19). Boston compares favorably with the northern California sites that pose the most direct challenge for attracting and retaining firms. But to remain competitive, Boston must help new and growing firms find good places for manufacturing and other operations, get the financial assistance needed to begin or expand operations, and sort through a wide range of complex tax, regulatory, and technical issues.



## Silver Line

**The Silver Line.** The Washington Street corridor is a stable business district (**waiting for call from Washington Gateway Main Streets**), drawing customers from the metropolitan area as well as from the South End and Lower Roxbury. To aid its economic growth, it was recently included in the Department of Housing and Urban Development's designation of the Enhanced Enterprise Community. This vibrant community was already the subject of a design charrette sponsored by the Boston Society of Architects, which led to the South End-Lower Roxbury Economic Development Plan and the creation of the Washington Street Task Force and the Washington Street Design Oversight Committee.

What Washington Street lacks is a permanent public transit service to bring more people to the area and better connect it with downtown and the neighborhoods. The relocation of the Orange Line in 1987 initiated a wave of disinvestment and decay. As a replacement service the MBTA is constructing the Silver Line, an articulated bus running from Dudley Square in Roxbury into downtown Boston connecting with the South Boston Transitway and Logan Airport through the Ted Williams tunnel.

With many advantages over both the typical city bus and the light rail trolley, the articulated bus will not have the expensive infrastructure ~~stuff~~ that a trolley would require, but it will be more permanent and reliable than a regular bus. Twenty feet longer than a normal bus, and with an accordion-like bend in the middle, an articulated bus has as good or better turning radius than a regular bus, an important consideration in Boston's narrow streets.

As part of the new transit project the MBTA and the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) will allocate funds for the redesign and reconstruction of Washington Street, including sidewalks, street trees and street furniture, which would not have been done if the line had run underground. A new color on the MBTA map, the Silver Line will have a limited number of stops at significant locations. The bus shelters at each of these stops will have maps, schedules and other information like the train stations. For most of its route the Silver Line will have a separate right-of-way, giving it another advantage over a regular bus.

### Map call-outs:

1. **South Station** – Connecting the Silver Line to the Red Line, the Commuter Rail, Amtrak, and buses going all over the country.
2. **Chinatown T Station** – The gateway to Chinatown, the New England Medical Center and the Theater District.
3. **Boylston Street T Station** – Location of possible underground connection between Silver Line and the Green Line.
4. **Theater District** – The subject of a master plan by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.
5. **New England Medical Center.**
6. **Don Bosco High School** – Across from the New England Medical Center, the former Don Bosco high school is in the process of being redeveloped into a limited service hotel and a YMCA for Chinatown. The adjacent site is owned by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and is being considered as a site for modular classrooms.
7. **Massachusetts Turnpike and Commuter Rail crossing** – A physical and psychological barrier between the South End and Downtown Boston, the



Massachusetts Turnpike is also the subject of an air-rights planning initiative of the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

8. **Peter's Park.** The concentration of new housing around Peter's Park will create a constituency for the park essential for its revitalization.
9. **Blackstone Elementary School.**
10. **New Boston Police Station** – near Ruggles Station.
11. **Blackstone and Franklin Squares.**
12. **South End Historic Burial Ground.**
13. **Boston Medical Center** – Created through the merger of the Boston University Medical Area and Boston City Hospital.
14. **Intersection with Massachusetts Avenue.**
15. **Newmarket Industrial Development Area.** The new master plan being developed for the area will focus on functional issues that have been ignored in recent years, such as streetscape design, traffic right-of-ways and the redevelopment of the Newmarket triangle for parking.
16. **Ramsey Park** – including the new Jim Rice baseball diamond modeled after Fenway Park.
17. **Melnea Cass Boulevard Intersection** – the possible location of a stop on the Urban Ring Transit Service.
18. **Vacant Land** – opportunity for community-based developments

- ♦ **Washington Gateway Main Streets Program.** Washington Street from Massachusetts Avenue to \_\_\_\_ street is also part of the Boston Main Streets Program. The Main Streets Program is part of a national program to link businesses within an area with government – in this case the city of Boston – to attract more people to the area.
- ♦ **Challenges.** Residents have noted some challenges to be overcome to return Washington Street to its former glory. The physical deterioration of the street – large potholes, ripped up sidewalk, and poor quality of street repairs is one that should be remedied with the planned reconstruction of Washington Street. The Silver Line should also help remedy the current disconnect to neighboring areas – particularly to the downtown – due to physical barriers, like the Massachusetts Turnpike and the Southeast Expressway.





## **South Boston Waterfront**

The South Boston Waterfront – 1,000 acres of land surrounded by three bodies of water less than a mile from the Financial District – has been called Boston's last frontier. Long a collection of abandoned rail yards and surface parking lots, the Waterfront promises to build on several important projects to become one of the great mixed-use districts of urban America.

Under a Public Realm Plan adopted by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 1999, the district would become mixed-use community with great access to the seaport, a traditional urban grid, a dynamic new convention center, offices located in proximity to the new federal courthouse, a vibrant working port, and strong transportation connections to the city and region.

The BRA's plan for the area was the result of hundreds of community meetings, work with an internationally acclaimed design firm, and coordination with Boston's elected officials. The plan builds on \$20 billion in public infrastructure investment recently completed or now underway.

At the center of the plan is public access to the three bodies of water that define the district – the Fort Point Channel to the west, the Reserved Channel to the east, and the Inner Harbor along the north. Bostonians will enjoy access to the waterfront through a broad pedestrian space known as Harborwalk, street design that provides exciting view corridors, and the maintenance of authentic waterfront activities. Rather than the "theme park" design adopted by other seaport cities, Boston has chosen to generate excitement at the water's edge through a broad mix of nearby activities.

The new Federal Courthouse, opened in 1998, is already one of the city's great landmarks. The courthouse has led to a number of other developments including new hotels and residential construction. The new 1.7-million-square-foot convention center will have an even more dramatic impact on the district. The center is expected to create 3,000 permanent jobs and pump hundreds of millions of dollars of new economic activity into the Boston metropolitan area.

The district has three east-to-west "main streets" that orient people to its sub-district – new Northern Avenue, Summer Street, and Congress Street. (37). These broad boulevards provide direct access from the Financial District and help to organize the larger grid of streets, parks, buildings, and industrial spaces. Three streets running from south to north – New Wormwood Street, D Street, and Old Summer Street – will provide direct connections from the South Boston residential community to the waterfront.

At the center of the Waterfront's transportation network is the new Ted Williams Tunnel, which runs to Logan Airport. Eventually, the Tunnel will become the terminus of the Massachusetts Turnpike along new ramps in the Waterfront. Public transit will be anchored by the Silver Line, with stops near high-density development around New Northern Avenue and the Piers District. The Silver Line will extend from the Waterfront to South Station, to Chinatown, down Washington Street to Dudley Square in Roxbury, and to points beyond. The Seaport is also considered a critical connection in the Urban Ring, a circular transit system under study by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

Water transit will play a major role in the life of the South Boston Waterfront. Three hubs – Long Wharf, Fort Point Channel, and the Piers District – will link routes to land-side transit terminals and stations. Fort Point Channel will provide access to South Station and the Northern Avenue Silver Line, while the Piers will provide service for commuters, day excursions, and working harbor craft.



## **Sprawl**

The issue of urban sprawl has become a leading environmental issue in American politics in recent years. Planners and policy-makers have explored the way that low-density, automobile-oriented development has undermined the vitality of cities and suburbs alike.

Even though sprawl is generally considered a regional problem – with the destruction of farms and countryside by the development of tract housing, malls, and highways – the problem also has an important urban dimension.

Cities like Boston suffer from “internal sprawl” when development is indiscriminately scattered, making it difficult for businesses to develop a critical mass and even more difficult for people to walk or take public transit to work, shop, and explore the city.

Analysts say that sprawl is typically characterized by:

- Unnecessary land consumption.
- Low average densities in comparison with older centers.
- Auto dependence, which creates large gaps between activities because of the need for roads and parking lots.
- Fragmented open space, wide gaps between development and a scattered appearance.
- Separation of uses into distinct areas, which requires people to travel by car to get from one residential, retail, service, or recreational space to another.
- Repetitive one story commercial buildings surrounded by acres of parking.
- Lack of public spaces and community centers.

To combat sprawl, it is necessary to develop compact urban centers and villages with high density, a mix of uses, pedestrian-friendly spaces, concentration of public facilities, services and spaces, diverse building types, concentrations of community activities, preservation of existing buildings, and protection of existing open spaces from development.



## Street hierarchy

Development of streetscape standards – how a street should look, what kinds of traffic should bear, and how it relates to buildings, open spaces, and other roads – depends on the purpose of the road. The dominant value of Boston street design should be to make as many streets as “walkable” as possible. The vitality of the city depends on encouraging people to venture out on foot or bike.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials has identified four main categories of roadways to guide streetscape design and transportation planning.

City agencies must work with community groups to determine the best designation for their streets. The designation is important not only for providing a safe and efficient street system for residents and merchants, but also because federal and state funding depends on the types of roads.

**Regional thoroughfares** are major highways that limit direct access to buildings and other spaces along the way. Many of these roads are designed to connect Boston’s major employment centers – Downtown and the Longwood Medical Area – with residential communities on Boston’s periphery. Interstate 93, the Massachusetts Turnpike, Morrissey Boulevard, and the VFW Parkway are good examples in Boston.

Highways and thoroughfares usually have no place for walkers and bicyclists. But a number of parkways in Boston could provide pleasant spaces separate from the roadways. These parkways include the VFW, Cummins Highway, and Hyde Park Avenue, and Soldiers Field Road.

**Arterial roads** connect major centers of activity in urban areas. These streets provide efficient automobile access to places such as sports complexes, employment centers, museums, and even major parks. Examples include Boylston Street and Huntington Avenue in the Fenway, Columbia Road in Dorchester, Cambridge Street near Government Center and Beacon Hill/West End, and Rutherford Avenue in Charlestown.

Each of these streets offers great opportunity for creating more pedestrian-friendly environments. Better sidewalks, more attractive building frontage, and better traffic signaling can provide dramatic improvements. The Boston Boulevards Initiative has developed plans for improvements in 10 streets throughout the city.

**Collector roads** channel traffic from local streets and roads and put them on arterial streets. These roads are transitional. They buffer local communities from major traffic corridors while at the same time providing quick access to large-scale roads in the city. Examples include Tremont Street in Mission Hill, Jersey Street in the Fenway, River Street in Dorchester and Mattapan, and First Street in South Boston.

Because they are connected to local roads, collector streets need to provide strong pedestrian paths – especially at intersections – and clear direction to drivers that they are near residential areas.

**Local roads** serve the transportation needs of residents and small merchants in neighborhoods. These roads should give priority to walkers and bicyclists to ensure that people feel safe and welcome on the streets of local communities. When automobiles threaten the safety of walkers and bicyclists, strategies should be adopted to slow down and redirect autos. Wide sidewalks, narrow road lanes, textured pavements, reduction of sightlines are all practical strategies for protecting the streets for pedestrians.



## Streetscape and economic development

Can widely accepted planning principles be applied to the imperatives of development in today's economy? This is a crucial question in determining the policies of the city with regard to future development. At a Boston 400 workshop, representatives from urban planning and design firms in the city responded with a resounding yes.

More than any other single factor, developers need predictable and reliable "rules of the game" in order to decide what projects to do and where to do them. "Being clear about the rules and regulations is most important," said Frank Keefe, former Director of the Office of State Planning. "The developer will either say 'go' or 'no go.' ... If anything, cities can be more profitable with these principles." David Vickery of Spaulding and Slye added: "The private sector will do what you tell it to do. Developers are willing to play by tough rules."

Development experts identified seven principles to guide land use and urban design:

- ✓ **Streets and Sidewalks:** One of the attractive characteristics of Boston is its pedestrian-centered streets and sidewalks. Street width, sidewalk width and short blocks with frequent street crossing contribute to the pedestrian accessibility and store visibility essential for successful retail areas. Small blocks in a traditional urban street grid can even accommodate large-scale retail operations like a supermarket. Supermarket sizes range from 25,000 to 80,000 square feet and the average block in Boston's Back Bay is 100,000 square feet. The traditional street grid also eases road congestion by providing more route options and increasing circulation.
- ✓ **Public Amenities.** A number of elements can make the streetscape pleasant for pedestrians. Street furniture and other amenities – bus shelters, information kiosks, public toilets, special lighting and street trees – foster a lively street life. Public parks draw communities together by providing places to sit, places for children to play, and space for community events and activities. Posted maps and signage help to orient people in the city.
- ✓ **Buildings.** Once the public realm is framed by blocks and streets, buildings further define those spaces. Buildings provide the "walls" to the "public living room." Buildings need to fit the scale and character of the community, providing a sense of proportion and delight. Adding to the human scale of the buildings is the building frontage and orientation. Buildings should have as many doors and windows as possible, with detailing and transparent frontage. All buildings in urban zones to come up to the street line, and should be oriented as much to the street as they are to their own interiors.
- ✓ **Critical Mass.** A critical mass of residential development is essential to develop markets for retail activities – and vice versa. Generally speaking, 2,000 to 3,000 units of housing are required to support local retail businesses. This density is difficult to achieve in low or middle income neighborhoods because of the extremely high costs of housing development – about \$175 per new square foot; \$135 per square foot for rehabilitation of existing units -- without government subsidies or linking it expensive office space developments with increased heights.
- ✓ **Mixed-use.** One of the advantages of urban living is the convenience of having stores, cultural activities, recreational opportunities, churches, schools, and offices near to where one lives. The proximity of retail and residential space allows people to easily and efficiently get coffee, a newspaper, a sandwich, and their dry-cleaning without make a long trip away from home. This is only possible with mixed use development.
- ✓ **Parking.** Because of their need for a population of 100,000, major supermarket corporations usually insist on numerous spaces for parking. But, the need for parking for large-scale retail really depends on the overall population and density of the neighborhood. The Star





Market in Allston requires only 150 spaces, which are located behind the store, because 70 percent of all customers walk to the store. A new retail facility in the suburbs would require five slots per 1,000 square feet, whereas Macy's in Downtown Crossing has zero parking spaces.

✓ **Public Transit.** The Boston region needs to develop better systems for commuting. The number of non-resident workers in the City has increased dramatically in recent years. With housing costs getting higher, this trend can be expected to continue. Without a comprehensive transit strategy, Boston risks losing its competitive edge in labor markets. The inadequacy of public transit has been addressed by the creation of numerous shuttles to bring workers from T stations and parking lots to workplaces. These shuttles can be inefficient and inadequate. Eventually, they need to be replaced with comprehensive improvements in public transit.

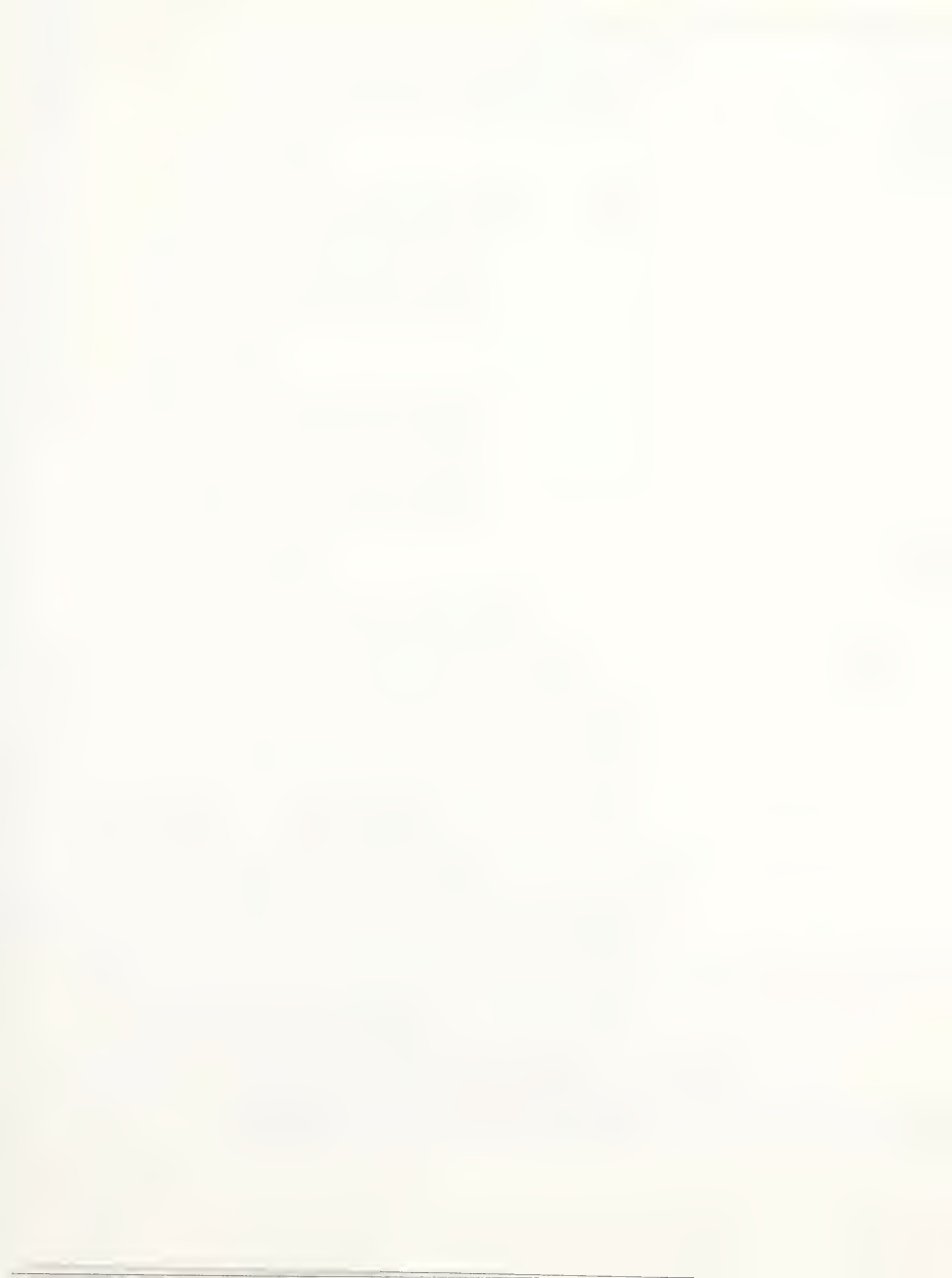
The creation of a special overlay district is one way to address these issues. An overlay districts creates a special set of rules to the existing zoning regulations of the neighborhood. Overlay districts are also useful around rivers and other natural spaces.



## SIDE Transportation projects underway

<NOTE: This sidebar will be updated based on information received the day this draft was copied. Some projects will be added – others will be deleted.>

Transportation planning projects	Description
Access Boston 2000 - 2010	Access Boston is the City of Boston's citywide transportation planning process that aims to provide the foundation for the city's long term transportation vision.. It will focus on the use of all modes of travel – walking, vehicles, transit, water transportation, and bicycles – through a four priority topics: serving the neighborhoods addressing congestion managing parking enhancing regional connections.
Boston Inner Harbor Passenger Water Transportation Plan	The BRA released the executive summary of its comprehensive water transportation plan in November 1999. The goal of the plan is to take advantage of renewed interest in development along the waterfront, to expand the capacity and improve the quality of the Inner Harbor terminal facilities, along with their respective intermodal connections along the waterfront.
Public transportation projects	Description
Green Line extension to Medford Hillside	Project would extend north branch of the Green Line from Lechmere Station in East Cambridge to Medford Hillside near Tufts University.
Silver Line (Washington Street replacement service)	The Silver Line is the future line that will replace the elevated train line that used to run between Dudley Square in Roxbury and downtown Boston along Washington Street. Stations have been designed, an articulated bus vehicle has been chosen, and service is scheduled to begin in 2004. The Silver Line will be considered part of the MBTA's subway system.
South Boston Piers Transitway	Scheduled for completion in the year 2002, the Transitway will connect South Station via tunnel to the new Federal Courthouse at the Fan Pier, the World Trade Center, and other future development in the South Boston Waterfront. The Transitway will eventually be part of the future Silver Line.
Urban Ring	The Urban Ring would be a circumferential public transit system connecting the existing, radial lines of the existing subway and commuter rail system through six municipalities: Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Somerville, Everett, and Chelsea. The MBTA is currently in the process of doing a Major Investment Study in an effort to secure funding for the project.
Blue Line modernization	The Blue Line modernization project is an effort to



	redesign the Aquarium, State, Government Center, and Bowdoin stations, repair the tracks, and improve the quality of service along the line.
Red Line / Blue Line pedestrian connection	Switching from Red Line to Blue Line subway lines requires two switches, discouraging Red Line riders from taking the "T" to the airport. An opportunity to build a pedestrian connection between _____ and _____ exists.
Blue Line extension to Charles/MGH	As part of the Central Artery / Tunnel Project funding legislation, the MBTA committed to extend the Blue Line from Bowdoin to Charles / MGH to make another Red Line connection. The Conservation Law Foundation is now suing the MBTA for not following through on this commitment.
North / South Rail Link	The Boston metropolitan region is currently served by two regional rail networks: one terminating at North Station and the other at South Station. The two stations are one mile apart, and the North / South Rail Link project would join the services from the two stations to allow continuous service from Maine to New York and points south.
Blue Line extension to Salem	The MBTA plans to extend the Blue Line from Wonderland north to Salem.
<b>Station redesign</b>	<b>Description</b>
South Station improvements	
North Station improvements	The project, done in conjunction with the Central Artery / Tunnel Project, will establish an underground connection between the Orange Line and the Green Line.
Airport station	Airport station is currently being redesigned as part of an effort to modernize the Blue Line and improve air traffic connections to ground-level transportation.
Dorchester Red Line stations	The latest State transportation bill included funds for the redesign of Red Line stations in Dorchester including: Savin Hill, Fields Corner, Shawmut, and Ashmont.
Aquarium	The Aquarium Station is currently being reconstructed as part of the Blue Line modernization project.
Charles / MGH	The MBTA has committed to completely renovating the Charles / MGH Red Line station to make the station accessible and improve the pedestrian connections to the station from the Charles Circle area.
Government Center	The MBTA has been ordered to redesign the Government Center T station to make it accessible by the year 2003.
<b>Roadway projects</b>	<b>Description</b>
Cambridge Street	
Hyde Park Avenue	
Brighton Avenue	



Rutherford Avenue	
Washington Street	
Avenue of the Arts	In 1997, the mayor designated the portion of Huntington Avenue from Massachusetts Ave. to Longwood Ave to be the "Avenue of the Arts." Some of the many artistic institutions and organizations located on the avenue include: the Museum of Fine Arts, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, The Handel and Haydn Society, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Massachusetts College of Art, and Boston's public school for the arts, the Boston Arts Academy.
<b>Bicycle projects</b>	<b>Description</b>
South Bay Harbortrail	The South Bay Harbortrail project will create a mile-long linear park and promenade providing users with the opportunity to experience and enjoy Boston's historic Fort Point channel.
Neponset Greenway	Construction of the Neponset Greenway, a trail along the banks of the Neponset River from Neponset Circle to Central Avenue, began in the Fall of 1999. The path is scheduled to be paved and open to the public in the Spring of 2000.
East Boston Greenway	Construction of the East Boston Greenway, connecting the waterfront at Maverick Square to the Belle Isle Marsh, began in the Fall of 1999. Segments of the greenway are still undetermined.
Emerald Necklace Greenway	Emerald Necklace advocates and bicycle advocates have recently joined forces to develop a strategy for reconnecting the parks along the Emerald Necklace into a continuous linear park.





## **Urban Ring**

Boston has four rail transit lines that branch out from the downtown, connecting it to Boston's other neighborhoods and nearby suburbs. Although a system of buses and commuter lines supplements these rail lines, this primarily radial system can make travel very inefficient. To get from the end of one line to the end of a different line, one has to go into the heart of downtown and transfer – perhaps more than once – and then travel out again. Not only does this waste time of the passenger, but it creates other problems for Boston. Forcing everyone to come into the downtown creates unnecessary congestion in the stations in Boston's inner core – Park, Downtown Crossing, Haymarket, Government Center – which are currently nearing capacity (look for stats). In addition, there are still many areas that are underserved by the current system, stunting their growth or shifting it to dependency on cars. Traffic congestion is also a problem associated with the inefficient transit system. Increased car use also causes environmental damage. Specifically, the Boston area has a rating of 'serious' in ozone non-attainment and 'moderate' in carbon monoxide non-attainment.

A new circumferential transit service will be more than just a solution to these transportation problems, the Urban Ring will connect new residential and commercial areas, stimulate development, and provide transportation to recent growth areas. Development in areas like Upham's Corner have been stunted by inaccessibility, which would be remedied with a new transit service linking it to the millions of people who use the existing rail system. Growing areas, such as Charlestown Navy Yard, Kendall Square in Cambridge, the Longwood Medical Area, Boston Medical Center, and South Boston need better transportation to maintain their growth and connect them to one another.



## **Washington Street**

Washington Street, Boston's oldest and longest street, is the spine of the city's residential and commercial life. Stretching from the North End south to West Roxbury, Washington Street also defines the character of other diverse neighborhoods such as Chinatown, the South End, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and Roslindale. Fully one-fourth of the city's population lies within five blocks of the boulevard, providing a strong market for goods and services.

Washington Street has been the focus of an intense community-based planning process since the Fall of 1995, when Mayor Thomas M. Menino appointed a 40-member task force to consider how to revitalize the nine-mile road.

In 1997, the Task Force released a report that called for a comprehensive plan for improving Washington Street that would:

- Create a new Silver Line transit line to replace the old elevated trains that used to travel along Washington Street from Downtown to Forest Hills. The Silver Line will travel from the South Boston Waterfront to Chinatown and then Dudley Square in Roxbury.
- Invest millions of dollars in public money to enhance the physical quality of Washington Street. Working with the Massachusetts Highway Department and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, the City would oversee major improvements to streets and sidewalks, parks, public buildings, and parking facilities. Establish streetscape design guidelines to guide public-works improvements on the street in the next generation. Also make new investments in Peters Park, the South End Burial Ground, Blackstone and Franklin Squares, and planing of new street trees.
- Establish a Business Improvement District at a 50-block area centered on Downtown Crossing to raise \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million to fund streetscape, façade, and security improvements. Boston's BID, which requires approval by the state legislature, is the second such special district in the state.
- Encourage businesses to locate on Washington Street by leveraging money, providing low-interest loans, providing vacant parcels, and coordinating planning at strategic parcels. A tax-free retail sales zone, small enterprise lending programs through Boston banks, funds from the Boston Empowerment Center offer funding for small-scale businesses. Larger-scale investments at the \$500-million BioSquare development and the Boston Medical Center provide anchors for the area.
- Commit funds for the rehabilitation of housing for low- and moderate-income families. Working with community development corporations, the Archdiocese of Boston, and other entities, the City of Boston has committed to rehabilitating existing structures and building new housing all along the corridor.
- Concentrate new light industrial, Grade B office, and retail spaces at Washington Street and Melnea Cass Boulevard. By providing for a mix of uses along Melnea Cass, the strategy aims to avoid the "eggs in one basket" approach that saw the location of plants for the Digital Equipment Corporation and Stride Rite footwear company. Building on plans of the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, which purchased the old Stride Rite site, the City is coordinating a mixed-use strategy to revitalize the area. Melnea Cass Boulevard and Washington Street might also be the location of a station on the Urban Ring circumferential transit system.
- Encourage restoration of some of the street's most important historic structures, such as the theater buildings near Chinatown, Minot Hall, the Allen House, and schools and other public buildings.







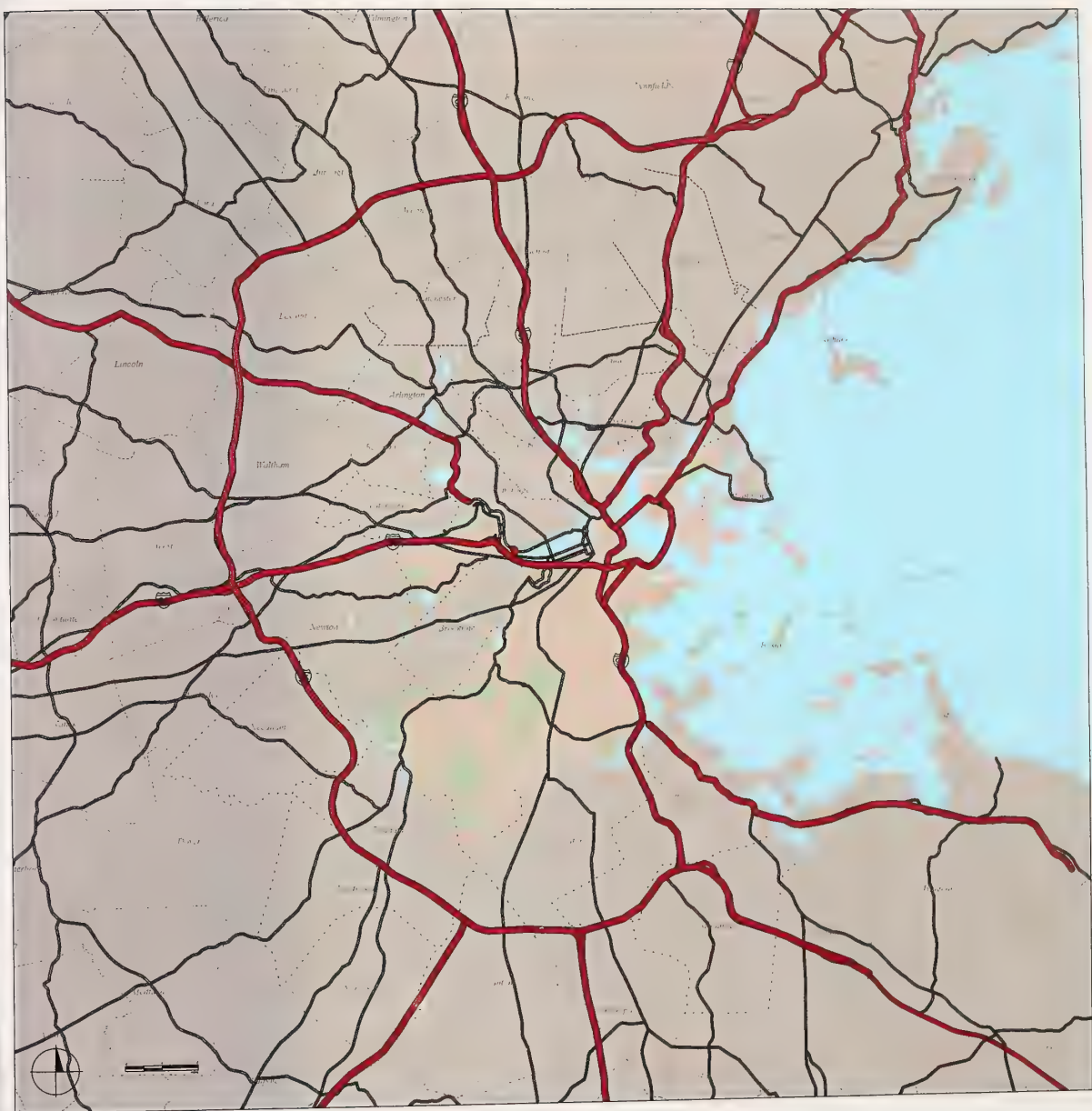






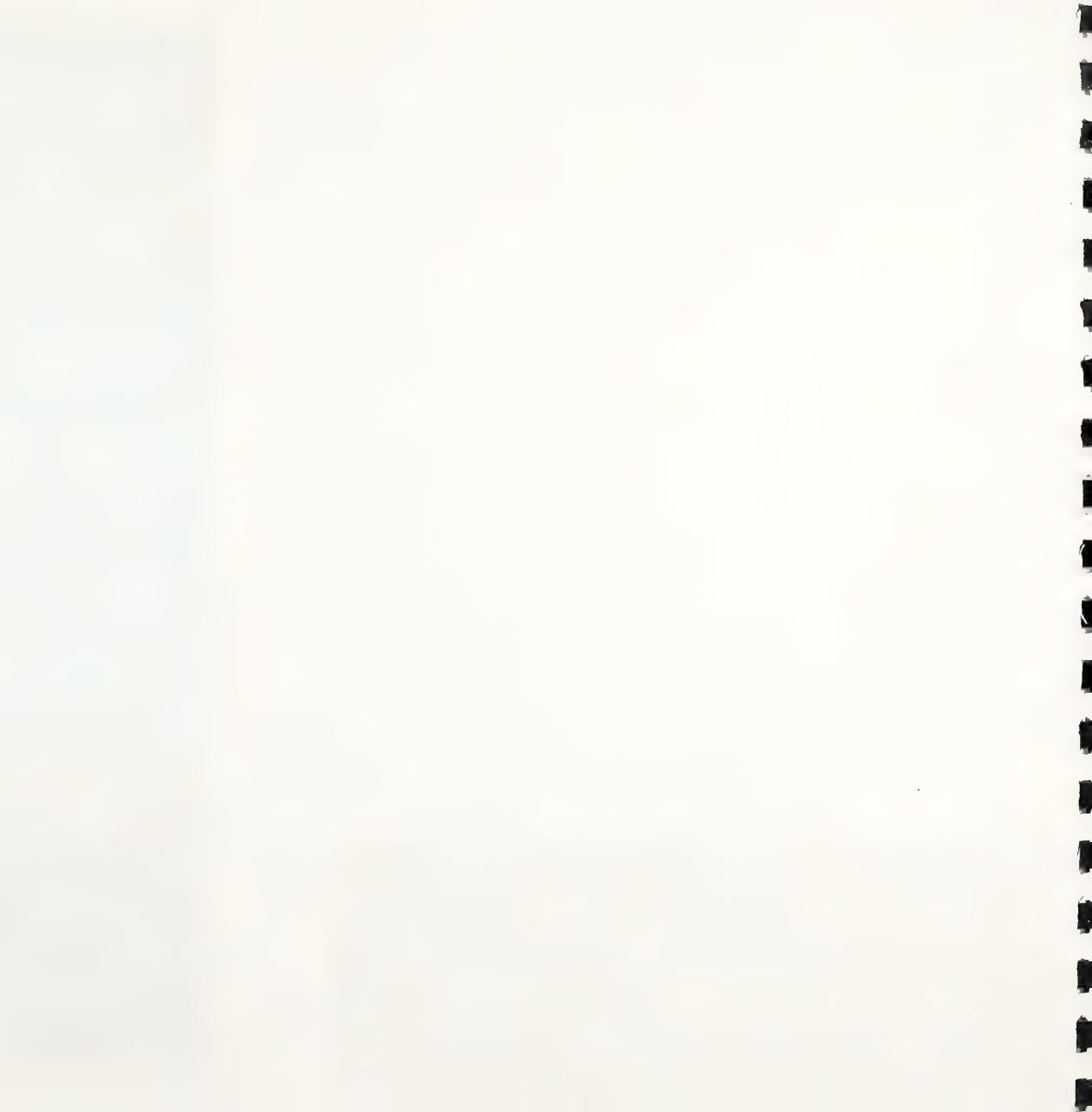


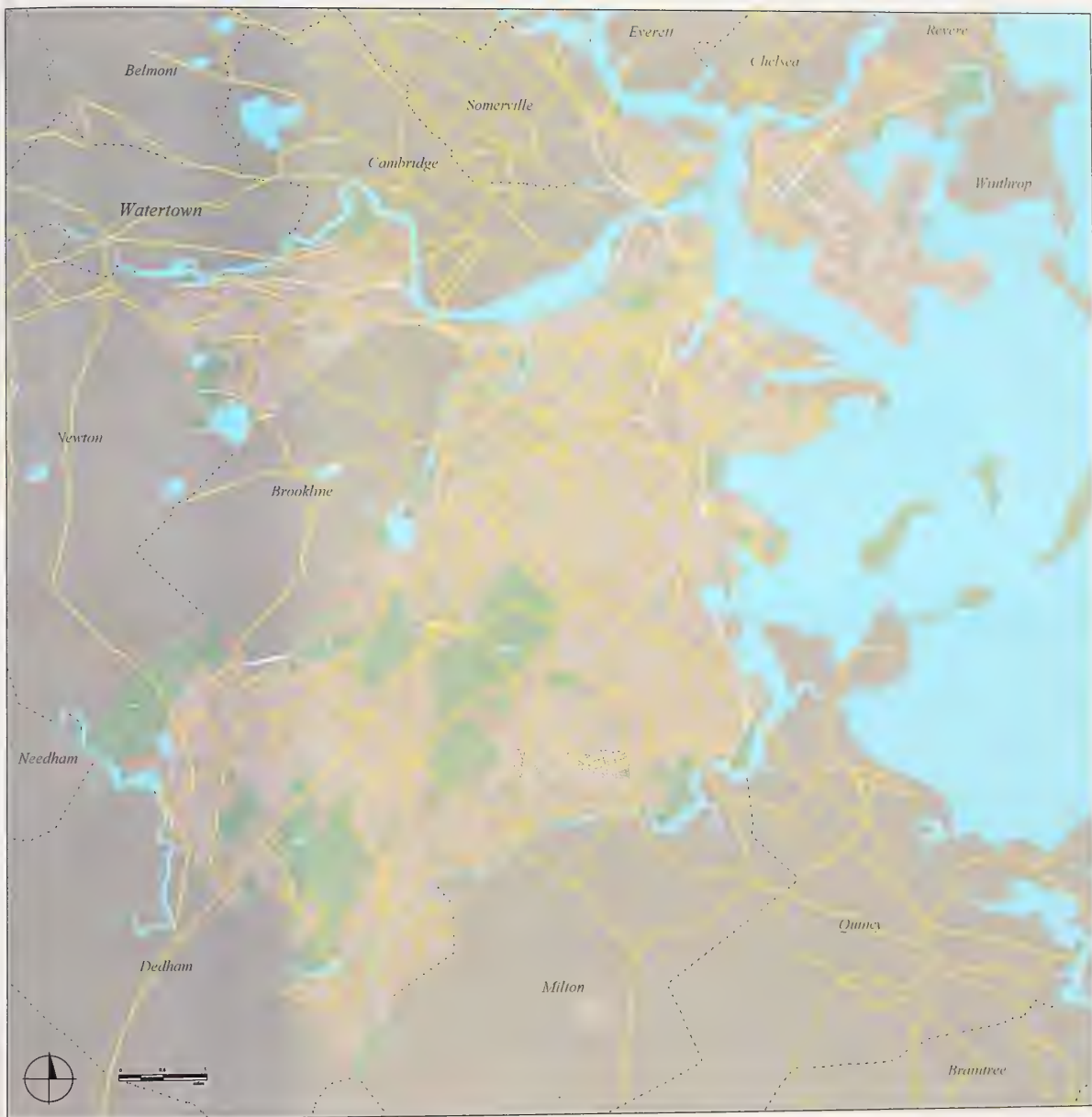
























Lovely Wharf -  
Charlestown Navy Yard

Long Wharf -  
Charlestown Navy Yard  
Long Wharf -  
US Coast Guard  
US Fish and Wildlife  
Service

Long Wharf - Airport

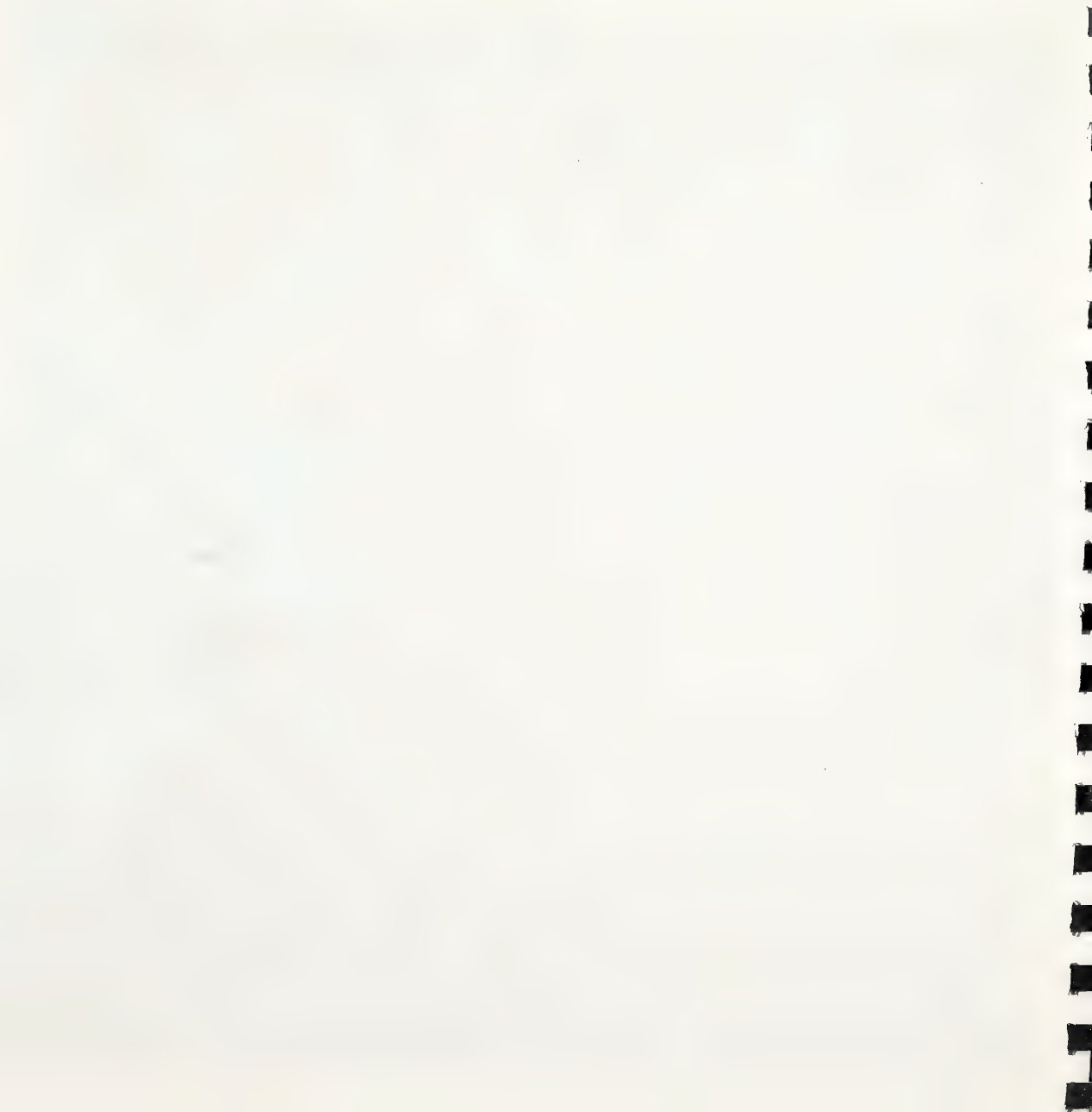
Roxes Wharf - Airport













---

# **Boston is a cultural and learning center**

Schools for the next century

Public art everywhere

Historic preservation for development

Finding your way in the city

Performance spaces in the neighborhoods



## 5.

### **Boston is a cultural and learning center**

Boston's culture is such a constant presence that it sometimes seems invisible. Almost every corner of Boston offers some kind of significant resource for the cultural and learning life of the city. In some ways, Boston is a victim of its own richness. Because of the prominence of Boston's attractions – such as the Freedom Trail, the Museum of Fine Arts, the New England Aquarium, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the historic neighborhoods of Beacon Hill and the North End, night clubs on Lansdowne Street, and major league sports, to name a few – other cultural sites do not attract the visitors that they otherwise might. In addition, because there are literally hundreds of places to go for the arts and recreation, providing good citywide wayfinding systems is difficult.

But city's cultural wealth – though sometimes hidden – lies also in the neighborhoods. Jamaica Plain offers one of the nation's most eclectic collections of architectural styles. Roxbury also offers stunning architecture, as well as a major art museum, historic battle sites, and great shopping districts that formed the core first of Jewish and then of black residents. Hyde Park is the home of Camp Meigs, where Union soldiers trained for the Civil War. Fenway is the home of museums, concert halls, conservatories, and universities, as well as the site of the first baseball World Series at the site of today's Northeastern University campus. The historic Mission Church, Olmsted park, and Tremont Street give Mission Hill a special character of its own, as do the historic center of medical science at the nearby Longwood Medical Area. Dorchester, from the historic cemetery of Edward Everett Square to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and University of Massachusetts campus to the old Baker Chocolate Factory in Lower Mills, is full of history and culture. Allston-Brighton combines the verve of student life with the historic character of old railroad communities. East Boston and South Boston, both made complete with landfill, have long been centers of immigrant life and ethnic culture. West Roxbury and Roslindale, once farming communities, are classic streetcar suburbs that offer the best of urban and suburban lifestyles and provide the modern answer to the utopian community of Brook Farm in West Roxbury.

The challenge of planning for Boston's cultural and learning spaces is to make the city's core cultural attractions accessible to all residents of the city – and to improve the accessibility and reach of cultural and artistic programs in the rest of the city. Despite their cultural richness, many neighborhoods feel isolated from the mainstream. The neighborhoods have inadequate transit connections to the city's cultural resources. The city also provides inadequate information and coordination of the resources that are open to people throughout the city. Finally, despite their vibrant cultural life, the neighborhoods have inadequate access to spaces for the arts, music, adult education classes, recreation, and community meetings.

Besides the inherent value of the arts for creating a lively an imaginative community for all residents, Boston's position as a cultural and learning center is also vital to the city's economy. Ever since the American Bicentennial celebration of 1976, Boston has strengthened its economic power and diversity with a strong convention and visitors industry. Some 11 million people visit Greater Boston every year and spend between \$2.8 billion and \$4.6 billion – about 8 to 13



percent of the local economy. About nine-tenths of these visitors comes from the Northeast. Cultural groups inject \$2.56 billion into the region's economy each year. Massachusetts draws larger audiences per capita for ballet, classical music, museums, and theater than any other state in the nation.

## Elements of a strong cultural and learning center

In community meetings across the city, Boston's residents have expressed their cultural aspirations with the following five basic principles of planning:

*All public buildings should enhance the cultural life of the city and its neighborhoods.*

Schools, post offices, community centers, health centers, and other public facilities not only should serve their particular functions, but also express the wider aspirations and values of the community. They should provide a "face" to the community that is exciting and welcoming, and which suggests the full range of civic activities that take place inside. The buildings should be designed as urban buildings, with strong connections to the life of the community. All buildings should serve a clear hierarchy of purposes, but at the same time be flexible enough to accommodate changes in programming over the years.

*All public spaces should offer a lively cultural environment.* A community's cultural life occurs not just in programmed buildings, but wherever people gather and move about. Streets and squares, parks and playgrounds, fairgrounds, business districts, residential neighborhoods, and all civic buildings should provide a diverse range of opportunities for public life. Wherever a person goes should be stimulating. Public art, architecture, storefronts, street life, landscaping, and meeting places should excite the imagination. Every community should boast a clearly identifiable *res publica* – a "public thing" that draws people together while respecting their diverse vantage points.

*Access to all cultural and educational spaces should be convenient for all.* All of the city's cultural and learning opportunities should be easily accessible by transit and bicycle, and all community spaces should provide a lively pedestrian environment. Automobile access to these spaces is also important, but the car should never overwhelm the character of the places or activities. The city's systems of streets and parking should be planned and maintained to provide efficient access while protecting neighborhoods and institutions.

*Finding places and activities should be easy for residents and visitors.* Finding all of Boston's cultural opportunities should be as easy as getting money from an ATM kiosk or walking the Freedom Trail. Two levels of "wayfinding" are important: destination and orientation centers all over the city and a system of signage that helps people who travel by foot, bicycle, transit, and cars to find major districts and cultural and educational resources. The destination and orientation centers should be built and managed by community partnerships in accordance with standards outlined by the City of Boston – building on the Mayor's Street Furniture Initiative.

*Institutions and Boston's residents and visitors should have incentives for exploring and connecting the city.* Museums, historical societies, schools and universities, historical societies, zoos and nature preserves, and other institutions have much to offer each other in terms of expertise, marketing, and joint programming. By pooling their resources, they might find strategies to address common concerns like transit access or community outreach. A number of institutions have met regularly to explore the possibility of developing a "passport" that guides residents and visitors to the full range of sites and activities in the city. Another possibility is the



creation of a “museum without walls,” which would provide exhibits on common themes concerning the history of Boston. Still other possibilities might include erecting information centers at institutions that tell visitors about the activities elsewhere in the city.





## INITIATIVE: SCHOOLS FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

Public schools are the places of the greatest common experiences of people in American communities. Schools not only provide the venue for learning from kindergarten through high school, but also provide many of the memorable experiences of communities – concerts and lectures, fundraising, sporting events, voting, continuing education, and a variety of social services. A great school, therefore, must be at the same time a great civic building. In addition to creating dynamic spaces that nurture children in manageable groups, schools also need to relate well to the larger community. A school should serve as the anchor of a community, providing places of lifelong learning, civic activities, and sports and other recreation. Schools should be connected to nearby community facilities and even commercial spaces, as well as convenient means of transportation. School programs should be able to take advantage of nearby museums, parks, urban wilds, historic sites, theaters and concert halls, and meeting spaces. Schools, in short, should be knitted into the fabric of the larger urban environment so that they foster discovery and mutuality.

### Vision

In the next generation, as Boston rebuilds or renovates virtually all of Boston's public school buildings, these facilities will reclaim their places as the great centers of community life. All school buildings will provide exciting places for "learning communities" of 200 to 300 students, where principals and teachers will get to know students and their families well enough to track their progress through the system. At the same time, schools will provide dynamic places for community activities, such as continuing education and cultural events like concerts and plays. The school and its campus will relate well to the community of which it is part. Teachers and students will be encouraged to explore the neighborhood as part of the educational process – with regular use of parks, historic resources, libraries, playing fields – while at the same time residents will feel welcome to visit the schools for a variety of purposes. School property and nearby neighborhood property will be open to all, as long as the principle users' needs are respected.

The process of school building will begin with the construction of five new schools to meet the goal set by Mayor Thomas M. Menino in his 1999 State of the City address. These schools need to be located at places where they can serve several assignment policies, including the current three-zone choice system, a possible neighborhood assignment system, or ten- or six-zone systems currently under consideration by the BPS. Locations that meet this siting criteria include Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan. [*see MAP of existing public school locations*]

### Assets and opportunities

Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Superintendent Thomas Payzant have made **school construction and rehabilitation a major priority** for the coming generation. Mayor Menino announced in May 1999 that the City would build new an elementary and middle school on Columbia Road and Melnea Cass Boulevard in Roxbury, respectively. Construction on the schools, which will house 732 and 768 students, respectively, will begin as early as 2000. The Blue Ribbon Commission has produced an exhaustive survey of current school conditions,



projected school populations, and possible school locations. [see *SIDE school building considerations*]

The **state provides funding for 90 percent of the overall cost** of school design and construction, but the city needs to provide the land for schools. Many state regulations for school buildings and campuses present difficulties for Boston. State requirements for 20-acre school sites, for example, are difficult to meet for high-density communities. The city has been able to get waivers of many of the construction requirements, especially standards for playing fields when the school is located near a major city park.

The city has undertaken an ambitious plan to **wire all of its schools for Internet** and other computer programs. This nationally recognized effort requires attention to the design of new schools that will be part of this network. Boston became the first big city school system to link all of its schools, libraries, and community centers into citywide Internet system. Kids Compute 2001 has used \$50 million in City funding to leverage \$26 million in outside funding, to meet Mayor Menino's goal of providing one computer for every four students by 2001. By the time of the program's completion, the City will invest \$125 million. The City's networking initiative was the winner of the Innovations in Education Award in 1998 from the National League of Cities.

The growing **literature on "effective schools"** has found that the school environment plays a major role in how children learn. For example, the most successful schools organize their students, teachers, and administrators as a "small community," in which all participants know each other and see themselves as part of a common enterprise. The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission argues that "there is a shared sense that the schools as presently organized are too large and contain too many students, and that ways must be found to create smaller communities, or 'houses' within the schools, for 300 to 350 students." A group of 200 or 300 enables teachers and students to get to know each other and work together over the long term. For a variety of reasons – legal, logistical, financial – it is probably not always possible to build schools for 200 students. But when building larger school facilities, it makes sense to create the kinds of spaces where groups of 200 can thrive. As the Blue Ribbon Commission stated, it is desirable to "internally zone" schools to provide appropriate learning environments for clusters within school campuses. Schools could offer a number of learning centers for 200-student groups, along with a shared gymnasium, cafeteria, computer lab, public health office, art and music facilities, and more. Such schools would be able to accommodate a dynamic period of experimentation in schools, with greater acceptance of charter and pilot schools and other creative approaches to providing public education.

Boston has **learned from the design mistakes** of the past. The Blue Ribbon Commission concluded, after surveying principals, teachers, and other school users, that the schools designed in the 1960s and 1970s do not meet the needs of everyday learning or the needs of community spaces. According to teachers and administrators surveyed by the Commission, these low-slung, suburban-style buildings excessively programmed some spaces, rendering them difficult to use when educational pedagogies and technologies changed. Other spaces were so loosely designed that it is difficult for teachers and administrators to divide up rooms and identify appropriate uses. The Blue Ribbon Commission concluded: "Open plan classrooms have not worked as well as was hoped. There is a need to simplify circulation and improve site design."

A broader **understanding of urban design** also provides a good foundation for the next wave of school building. Schools built in the 1960s and 1970s reflect that era's concern with opening the educational process to experimental learning processes. But experience has shown



that the school designs did not offer the flexibility to adapt learning spaces to different learning styles. In addition, the suburban character of much 1960s and 1970s development departed from a long tradition of fitting schools in their urban contexts. As the city has been revived in the last generation, there is a greater understanding about the need for buildings to fit into their community context and not to stand alone.

## Barriers and challenges

The Boston Public Schools faces a **crisis of capacity**. The schools already operate beyond 100 percent capacity, and many schools lack basic accessibility and facilities such as gymnasiums, computer labs, meeting rooms, and special education facilities. The Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research forecasts a net increase of 3,800 students by 2005 in Boston. The Boston Public School system owns 117 buildings with 10 million square feet of space. Two-thirds of these buildings were built before 1945, with the smallest and oldest schools at the elementary level. Half of all schools have less than 53,000 square feet – a fact that would not be so troubling if it did not translate into overcrowding and inadequate space for basic needs. Although the student population is not expected to increase beyond 65,000 by the year 2005, the need for more school space is expected to be greater because of changing assignment systems, new programs for young children, and higher standards for special education and other programs. Many of Boston's schools do not offer neighborhood access for many of the most populated areas of the city, such as Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, where schools were closed in the 1970s in the wake of court-ordered citywide busing for racial desegregation.

For a variety of reasons – uncertainty over student assignment policy and the complexity of accommodating pilot and charter schools – the BPS faces **uncertainty about what kinds of spaces needed for schools**. As a result, the new schools must provide good, modern facilities all over the city that can be adapted to fit changing demographic circumstances and assignment policies. Adding to the complexity is the shift from half-day to full-day kindergarten classes and the growing numbers of even younger children enrolled in early learning centers. The development of an “inclusion” model for special education, which allows a maximum of 20 students in elementary and middle-school classrooms (compared with a maximum of 30 students in regular middle-school classes), also puts pressure on the system for space and for the allocation of space to serve communities with greater numbers of special-needs children.

Other pressures on school space come from **growing demand for schools as community spaces**. Schools require space for community association meetings, sports and clubs, social services such as 12-step groups and medical testing, government uses such as civil service examinations and voting, adult education and training such as GED and ESL classes, and business uses such as apprenticeship programs.

Projections show that a **population bulge** now beginning school in Boston's system will impact higher levels of the system well into the first decade of the 21st century. Projections by the Massachusetts Institute of Social and Economic Research (MISER) show a peak kindergarten enrollment of 8,545 and a shortage of 4,428 seats in 1995, a peak total elementary school enrollment of 25,295 and a shortage of 8,545 seats in 1997, a peak middle school enrollment of 14,983 and a shortage of 906 seats in 2001, and a peak high enrollment of 20,571 and a shortage of 5,864 seats of in 2005.

In developing new building designs, school planners are **constrained by state regulations** for the size of the buildings and campus, as well as the types of spaces to be located in the



school. State regulations set specific standards the size of classrooms for different classes in elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as standards for a variety of administrative and recreational spaces. The state also sets standards for playgrounds, parking, and accessibility. The most difficult standard for schools is the amount of land necessary for new schools, but the state has shown a willingness to provide exemptions if the schools are located near parks that could be used for playing fields and educational spaces. Building standards have proved more difficult for BPS to negotiate exemptions. The state usually does not allow parking exceptions for schools located near transit stations.

The school department has found it **difficult to find sites to build schools**. The City is restricted to sites that it already owns and which meet environmental standards. Many of the City's vacant parcels are not close to residential neighborhoods or are more appropriate for other kinds of development. When the Mayor announced in January 1999 that the City would build five new schools, BPS officials struggled to find parcels in the underserved communities of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan. Uncertainty over the City's future school assignment system complicated the search for buildable sites. One of the constraints is the size of the buildings mandated by the state and recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission.

## **Actions**

### **The state should . . .**

- **Relax building and campus standards to allow Boston's and other cities' schools to reflect and serve the urban environment.** To qualify for state funding of 90 percent of the cost of school construction, school districts need to meet design specifications that are not always appropriate for urban facilities.

### **The city should . . .**

- **Provide incentives for transit, public buildings, and residential development to take place near school buildings to create an "urban village" setting.** Schools should be included in the transit-centered urban village planning for Boston 400. To promote the development of urban villages throughout the city, schools should be located near transit stations and parks. School children should become part of the everyday flow of people in the community.

The Blue Ribbon Commission emphasizes the value of locating schools close to parks and open spaces, so that those resources can be made available as play and learning spaces. But other community assets are also important. Proximity to historic and cultural sites is not only educational but also strengthens the overall character of the school campus. Location near a transit node could make the school more accessible to students, possibly reducing the cost of busing no matter what school assignment policy is in effect. Other community assets, including economic enterprises, could provide after-school opportunities to older students. They could also bring business people and others into a broad circle of support for the schools. It also makes the school's public programs – adult education, health programs, recreation programs – more accessible to the community at large. Ultimately, the school's success depends on its integration in a larger community.

- **Establish a policy for "banking" unused school buildings.** Over the past generation, several schools have been converted to housing and business spaces. Reconverting closed schools is difficult once they have been closed because of the expense of meeting rehabilitation code standards. Working with the state, the City should identify a strategy to banking unused



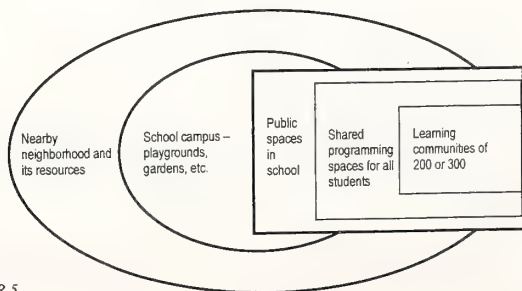


school and other civic buildings so that they can be used to meet the growing demand for schools.

- **Build schools with high quality, durable materials so that the buildings last a long time.** Develop strategies to identify the best building materials, and join other cities and towns in buying those materials in bulk to save construction costs. All civic buildings should be built to last for generations, using not only the finest materials but also the most community-oriented design principles and creating flexible spaces so that changing pedagogies and activities can be accommodated over time.

- **Build a strong school campus.** The school's campus is even more critical to the school's mission. Playgrounds, playing fields, sitting areas, gardens, and outdoor meeting spaces are critical to the life of the school. As after-school programs are added to the City's education system, such spaces are even more critical. When schools are located on uninspiring campuses, the social life of students and teachers suffers. A number of schools in Boston have undertaken creative efforts to improve their grounds with gardens, composts, playing fields, sitting areas, and the like. The Boston School Yards Initiative, a nationally recognized effort to spruce up playing areas, had organized 40 redesigns of schoolyards by 1999. The City of Boston allocated \$2 million annually from its capital budget for the program. [see *SIDE Boston Schoolyards Initiative*]

- **Create a gradation of kinds of spaces in the building** – from the most public spaces in the front of the building, to intermediate spaces in the middle, and a zone of learning deep inside the building. The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission emphasizes the importance of creating spaces for community activities such as cultural events, civic meetings, and participatory sports. Integrating these activities into the school building and campus requires a concerted strategy to create public-oriented spaces not only on the outer campus, but also in the front of the building itself. The Commission states in its report: "Members of the community should have access to the school's technology, libraries, recreational space, selected classrooms, cafeterias, and auditoriums at times that are not just limited to school hours." (Volume I, p. 15). Upon entering the school, it is important to provide a number of public spaces where the principal, staff, teachers, and students meet the outside world. Visiting dignitaries, parents, district administrators, and audiences for school events, and outside contractors all should get their first impression of the school in settings that express the aspirations of the school as an institution. These places should be conducive to the specific activities, but also send a message about the school's character. The school is a civic building as well as a learning center.





A number of shared programming activities should be located further inside the school. Libraries, computer labs, art and music classrooms, gymnasiums, and other spaces should be accessible to all of the members of the school. They should also be accessible to other members of the community.

At the core of the school are the learning communities of 200 or 300 students. Here is where academic learning takes place. Here, students and teachers find refuge from the hurly burly of community and school activities. Rather than being distracted by myriad programs that take place in the school – involving health care and hot meals for students, “take out” programs for special-needs students, and a wide range of community programming – students in these learning clusters can focus intently on their studies. Teachers have the opportunity to work in a more controlled environment, where they can get to know their students and build a process of group learning. As important as it is for modern schools to provide a wide range of services, it is even more important for classes to be free of distractions.

- **Make new school buildings flexible enough to adapt to changing pedagogies and community needs.** The Blue Ribbon Commission stated: “Flexibility is the critical component for successful construction of new schools and renovation of existing schools. Classrooms must be designed to accommodate shifting pedagogies, different mixes of learners, and a variety of educational activities. School buildings must be constructed to facilitate various ‘zoning’ options and to allow for conversion of use as needs change over time. A school’s design must allow for multiple uses of the same space by different grades and age groups.”

#### **Businesses, institutions, and community groups should . . .**

- **Create plans to make schools a vital part of the community.** In today’s works of before- and after-school programming, the community needs to play a larger role in the everyday life of the school. Businesses, cultural institutions, and athletic organizations need to contribute to the life of the schools. Every school should have a “friends of” group to help improve the connections between school and community.



## INITIATIVE: PUBLIC ART EVERYWHERE

Public art – physical representations designed specifically for the public realm – is essential to the development of community identity and form. Public art encompasses a wide array of displays, such as sculpture, monuments, murals, fountains, amenities such as seating and lights, music and sound. In whatever form it takes, public art helps a community express the ideas and ideals of its culture. Whether it commemorates important history, marks special places, aesthetically enhances the public space it occupies, promotes social gathering and interaction, or serves as a tool for orientation, public art enlivens the environment and makes communities more livable. Public art encourages social gathering and interaction, drawing people to different areas of the city.

Public art takes a number of different forms – both of them vital to the life of the city and its neighborhoods. Permanent art is intended to last forever, so the process of adoption can be controversial and the cost of siting and acquiring art can be expensive. Recent examples of new permanent displays in Boston include the Irish famine memorial on Washington Street in Downtown Crossing and the memorial to the firefighters who lost their lives in the Vendome Hotel fire of 1972. Temporary art can be installed for weeks or months at a time and may require a less rigorous process of adoption. Temporary art can be placed in public buildings, in display cases, and at selected pedestals in parks and other civic spaces. The Boston Parks and Recreation Department's summer arts program provides numerous temporary installations of art and offers opportunities for young people to produce art for public consumption.

### Vision

By the time of Boston's 400th anniversary, every neighborhood in the city should boast a public realm rich with public art that articulates the character and aspirations of those communities. Building on a basic infrastructure – with spaces at strategic locations all over the city for permanent and temporary installations, which would be adopted according to rigorous community-based review processes – Boston would showcase the cultural and artistic richness of the city. All public art would reflect the character of its location, adding to its historic, cultural or aesthetic significance. Existing pieces would be cleaned and restored regularly so that they continue to live up to the vision of their original creator. The placement of public art throughout the city would result from a rigorous, participatory process guided by the Boston Arts Commission. The Commission would enjoy greater powers to coordinate a master plan for public art, secure funds for the commissioning and placement of public art, and establish clear guidelines for placement and removal of public art. *[see SIDE kinds of public art]*

### Assets and opportunities

Boston's many civic, cultural and historic resources provide a **fertile environment** for the development of programs to incorporate public art into the daily experiences of all Bostonians – and City agencies provide a strong context for taking full advantage of those resources. The Boston Art Commission is the city's agency for approving, siting and preserving public art on city-owned property. Its services include Adopt-A-Statue, which raises funds for the maintenance of various monuments in the city; facilitation of community discussion and review of potential projects; technical assistance with regard to the siting of public art; research and



other support for artists; and a speaker's forum. The Commission's powers are limited, but it could provide a foundation for a dynamic, proactive arts policy that serves the needs of all communities in the city. In addition, the Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund, which provides support for open space improvements.

Boston's communities have a number of **great places for art**. The city has a vast network of parks and natural spaces – 10,025 acres in all – but also dozens of activity centers, universities, public squares, boulevards, and business districts. Not all of these places would be appropriate locations for public art. But many of these locations would benefit from the greater definition that installations might lend to the area. Boston's neighborhoods benefit from a vibrant community of artists eager to contribute to the vitality of the public realm.

In recent years, there has been a **growing appreciation of the role of art** in shaping the public realm. Planning efforts from the South Boston Waterfront to Cleveland Circle have stressed the importance of art in improving the attractiveness of communities. The popularity of open studios in Allston, Beacon Hill, the Fenway, Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Roxbury, South Boston, the South End, and the North End is testimony to the strength of the art's grassroots appeal. In 1998, 850 artists participated in open studios, which attracted approximately 12,000 visitors. The impact of the open studios is broad; the Boston Art Dealers Association reports that gallery activity on Newbury Street increases after open studio weekends in other neighborhoods.

## Barriers and challenges

Boston lacks an adequate **process for installing public art**. Boston lacks a government agency with enough authority and resources to oversee grassroots planning processes in the neighborhoods. Currently, the five-member Boston Public Art Commission's charge is to approve, site, and preserve permanent works of public art, but the Commission has no role in commissioning works. State legislation allows the Commission only to respond to proposals, not to develop a master plan or even priority projects. The Boston Redevelopment Authority oversees much of the public realm in the city; coordination of arts programs with the BRA and other state and city agencies is critical to the effort to improve the presence of art in the neighborhoods.

Boston lacks a dedicated **revenue stream to fund public art**. In its master plan for culture and the arts in Boston, the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs has identified creation of a dedicated stream of funds its major priority. Under the current system, communities are forced to seek funding from a variety of public, private, and nonprofit sources. The communities more skilled at "grantsmanship" have a better chance to get public art, regardless of the demonstrated need.

**Communities bear the burden of developing proposals** for art in public spaces, but they lack the expertise that would help them make informed decisions about art acquisitions. Residents possess an understanding of their communities and what ideas and values are important to express artistically. But even the most artistically inclined communities would benefit from access to a broader knowledge of the economic, siting, construction, maintenance, and even aesthetic issues involved in the placement of public art.

The City **lacks a comprehensive stewardship policy** to maintain and conserve all of the city's public art. The city's Adopt-a-Statue program maintains statues selected by the partner, but does not extend to smaller or less-popular works.





Boston **lacks a process to remove unappreciated public art**. Over the years, a number of installations have lost their appeal – because of changing tastes, neighborhood composition, or simply recognition that the installation is not of high quality. But Boston lacks procedures to remove art from the public domain. State law prohibits the alteration or removal of public art without the permission of the artist or artist's estate.

Boston **lacks a good contract for artists**. Many arts projects do not advance because of the prohibitive costs of insurance and bonding. The legal relationships between artists, state and city agencies, and corporations is often unclear, to the detriment of working artists. (A standard contract would be an integral element of a comprehensive process for the placement, funding, and stewardship of public art, which is proposed by the Office of Cultural Affairs in the master plan completed in December 1999.)

Commissioning and siting **public art can be controversial**. Even in the best circumstances, people in the neighborhoods will disagree about the need for public art, its quality, the appropriate siting, financing schemes, design of the site near the installation, and maintenance plans. Even in the best of circumstances, public art can create serious divisions within the community. Absent any citywide standards and procedures for each community to consider public art, such controversies are bound to make it difficult to make art a vital part of our communities. The lack of a policy for the temporary installation of art undermines the city's efforts to reach out to a broad constituency of artists, educators, residents, and merchants.

Despite widespread interest in art, **many communities lack constituencies for public art** because of the lack of installations and inadequate public efforts to expand public art and involve citizens in siting and selection of art in recent decades. Many neighborhoods have not added art to their public spaces for decades – some since the installation of World War I memorials. As a result, residents have not imagined how public art can improve the overall quality of the urban experience. In order for public art to develop more vocal and devoted neighborhood constituencies, the Boston Arts Commission or other city agency should engage all neighborhoods in a thoughtful process of identifying their priorities for public art in their communities.

## Actions

### The city should . . .

- **Establish a policy for commissioning works of art.** Either the Boston Arts Commission's mission should be expanded to include commissioning works or the City should establish a separate process under the Office of Cultural Affairs. Such a policy would provide a "tool kit" for communities interested in developing public art. The tool kit would include professional consulting from public art experts, professional planners or mediators who can work with communities to identify community desires and opportunities, a public process for writing a request for proposals (RFP's) and assessing proposals, access to reliable public funding, standard contracts, and thorough maintenance systems.
- **Remove legal and insurance barriers to art installation.** Advocates report that their efforts to install art in neighborhoods suffer over confusion over which entities will be responsible for caring for the art, acquiring space, and insuring installations against possible damages. The City should consider creating a legal entity, directed by a community-based board, with set numbers of artists, legal experts, and arts management experts, to provide technical advice throughout the process of installing and maintaining art.



- **Develop a comprehensive plan for adding public art to places throughout Boston's neighborhoods.** Starting with a comprehensive survey of existing works and an assessment of which areas are underserved, the City should identify priority areas and make technical support available for communities that petition for a public art program.

- **Generate a steady stream of capital and operating revenues for the arts.** Establish a simple tax program to provide a steady stream of funding for the arts, neighborhood parks, and other community-based resources. To assure a strong sense of community "ownership," community organizations might be encouraged to match government grants with their own funds or sweat equity. To create the necessary funds for public, Boston should look to other cities as models. Most major cities have percent-for-art programs through which a small portion (usually 1 to 2 percent) of certain construction costs are allocated to public art. Others have different systems, such as endowment programs, for making art accessible to the public. Boston does not have a percent-for-art program, but does receive money through programs such as Adopt-A-Statue and endowments such as the Browne Fund should identify the condition of works throughout the city and standards by which to determine which pieces need to be restored should be established. *[see SIDE public art funding]*

- **Establish community partnerships for community art.** The community process for approving new temporary and permanent art installations should be part of a broader process for determining the long-term vision and plan for arts in each neighborhood. Neighborhoods might wish to create Community Arts Partnerships that solicit ideas for improvements in the public realm and provide options for residents to vote on. City projects like Main Streets, the Boulevards Program, the Schoolyards Initiative – as well as existing community organizations like historical societies, universities, museums and other cultural other organizations – can provide the vehicles for getting community input and commitment for public art.

- **Establish procedures and locations for temporary displays of art.** Limited displays can add as much to the life of the community as permanent installations. Communities should be invited to participate in a community planning process to identify sites and formats for the placement of all kinds of temporary art, ranging from display of photography and painting to erection of sculptures, mobiles, and other three-dimensional art. The Boston Arts Commission should oversee a comprehensive process of temporary art installation in each neighborhood of the city.

The City could provide funding through NICE and other city programs for improvements of public spaces. In addition, local boards of trade could establish "windows on the arts" programs, in which stores would provide window space for public displays of all kinds of visual arts. The city could provide awards for neighborhoods that were judged to create the most creative displays and art pieces; this program could be modeled on the Department of Neighborhood Development's annual gardens competition, with prize money going for improvements to the public spaces like squares, landscaping, or new art installations.

- **Establish procedures for removing unwanted public art.** Other cities provide models for the removal of unwanted public art. Portland has a clear policy for decommissioning public art; a process of review begins 10 years after the art's installation or when the piece has been damaged or allowed to deteriorate.

### **Community organizations should . . .**

- **Establish community groups that can work with City agencies to locate public art in the community.** Since the process of adopting public art is only as good as the people involved,



every community should identify which residents and merchants are interested in learning more about the possibilities of art in public places. These groups should join forces with citywide organizations like UrbanArts at the Massachusetts College of Art to learn more about how to identify the artistic needs and aspirations of the community.



## INITIATIVE: HISTORIC PRESERVATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

The essence of a city's vitality and diversity is its ability to create a mixture of old and new buildings, parks, and other spaces. Great cities are organic. They develop over time, adapting old physical forms to the needs of new imperatives and activities. They provide a rich diversity of spaces that invite all kinds of activities to take place – and foster a synergy between the activities that gives rise to creativity. Old buildings give the city a depth that cannot be matched by any kind of stylistic ornamentation. Like rings on a tree, old buildings instruct us about the evolution of people and communities. Because the best old buildings are adaptable to a wide range of activities, they always find a way to fit into the larger community context. Because the buildings and the community grew up together, the buildings offer a frame of reference for everything else in the community.

Cities need to find ways of integrating their historic buildings and other resources into the longterm development of the neighborhoods. Ultimately, historic preservation is about managing change. The goal is not to fossilize the past, but make the past an integral part of an evolving community. It is about making the city more authentic and diverse, a place where people experience history in their everyday lives, not just a “special” attraction of interest to special groups and events. Preserving the past is a necessary part of seizing the opportunities of the future.

### Vision

In the next generation, Boston will develop a comprehensive strategy for enhancing *living historic spaces* and *distinctive historic resources* that cover all periods of Boston's history. Historic spaces will be enhanced in a way that makes them relevant for changing times and circumstances – part of the evolving built environment in the City. At the same time, the city will single out some significant historic sites as special attractions that should be *restored* (depiction of the resource at a specific earlier period) rather than *rehabilitated* (common treatment allows for change necessary to satisfy present-day demands). Planning will occur within a broad community context, with the formation of creative partnerships that promote strong civic “ownership” of spaces.

The major goal of historic development should be to strengthen the urban fabric of Boston – the dense, mixed-use, transit-oriented character of the City and its neighborhoods. Historic development and preservation should be integrated with efforts to improve parks and natural spaces, strengthen cultural institutions, develop campus and institutional master plans, and coordinate transportation planning.

### Assets and opportunities

**A number of agencies and organizations are involved in historic preservation and development.** Those organizations include the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston Landmarks Commission, Boston Parks and Recreation Department, Boston Transportation Department, Department of Neighborhood Development, and Department of Public Works; and organizations such as the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston Preservation Alliance, and Historic Boston, Incorporated.





Boston also has a **tradition of respect for its historic resources** and built environment. Community groups like Historic Neighborhoods, the Massachusetts Historical Society, Historic Massachusetts, Inc., as well as a number of neighborhood historic associations. Since the American Bicentennial of 1976, Boston has been known worldwide as a city that venerates its history. Concern for authentic and durable buildings and communities extends far beyond the old Shawmut Peninsula and includes neighborhoods like Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, the South End, Back Bay, and others.

In recent years, the **redevelopment of historic buildings has been the lynchpin of community development**. Historic brewery buildings in Jamaica Plain and Mission Hill, the Baker Chocolate Factory in lower Mills, and the Ferdinand Department Store building in Roxbury are just three examples of renovation projects that have substantially improved the overall quality of Boston's neighborhoods. *[see SIDE rehab pays]*

## Barriers and challenges

Many of the **best buildings have been redeveloped already**. Buildings that showed the greatest promise for redevelopment have received the greatest attention in the past two decades – leaving behind buildings with greater damage. Many of these buildings would not be appropriate for major preservation work because of the high costs, lesser importance as historic structures, and lack of connection to other community resources. *[see SIDE redevelopment challenges]*

Getting **funding from the federal and state governments is often complex** and difficult.

Many **buildings have deteriorated** because the lack of basic maintenance during idleness. If buildings are allowed to deteriorate, it gets more and more difficult to redevelop them. Weather damage, lack of maintenance to buildings and grounds, and stripping of internal spaces is common to long-unused structures.

## Actions

### The state should . . .

- **Pass the Community Preservation Act to make funding available in cities and towns for preservation.** This state initiative provides cities and towns with new options for raising money for parks and natural spaces, historic resources, and neighborhood business districts. *[see SIDE CPA, Chapter 3]*
- **Reform the rehabilitation code requirements on a state level.** Following the example of the State of New Jersey, which has seen inner-city rehabilitation increase 50 percent with the adoption of code reforms, Massachusetts could lead a renaissance of inner-city communities with responsible reform of its rehab codes. Rehabilitation codes should be separated from new-building codes to insure that unnecessary code demands are not made on people bring old buildings back to life. The goal of rehab codes should be to assure the safety of buildings, not just to meet standards that were designed for new buildings. Redevelopers should be allowed flexibility on standards for windows, doors, stairs, frontage, elevators, and fire escapes as long as effective standards are adopted to assure that buildings are safe and accessible. *[see SIDE rehab subcode]*

### The city should . . .



- **Establish a comprehensive database of buildings and sites, development projects, ownership records, funding sources, and legal requirements for historic renovation.** Efforts to protect and redevelop old buildings suffer from the lack of reliable information. Although the city benefits from publications that document many important buildings – such as Historic Boston Inc.’s casebooks of buildings in Boston’s neighborhoods – preservationists often struggle to get reliable and timely information about the challenges of preservation. The Boston Landmarks Commission or another city agency should have the resources to develop and maintain this database. Over time, the database should include photographic inventories and other detailed information about all old buildings in the city. The database should be available to the public free of charge through Internet sites, computer disks, and other formats.

- **Focus redevelopment efforts on schools, churches, and industrial buildings.** Establish a working group to consider strategies for making the best use of historic *school buildings*, and plan the new school buildings of the future. Develop strategies to prevent viable school buildings from being removed from the school inventory – such as a “banking” of school buildings to preserve their availability. Work with the Catholic Archdiocese, the partners for Sacred Spaces (Philadelphia), and other groups to develop a long-range plan for redeployment, sale, and reuse of church buildings. Devise a comprehensive list of possible kinds of reuse, and their pluses and minuses (e.g., social services, condos, recording spaces, restaurants, health clinics, galleries). Develop a system for determining whether market forces are most adequate, adaptive reuse, or demolition of industrial buildings. Build on the model of the redevelopment of the Charlestown Navy Yard. Link these analyses with a larger determination of where industrial activities should be located in the City of Boston.

- **Improve interpretation of historic sites.** Boston uses a number of different styles of signage, plaques, trails, and other devices to mark historic sites. Greater consistency could enhance the legibility of the city for residents and visitors alike. In addition, the city should consider creative new ways to tell Boston’s history. Photographic plaques that tell the story of long-lost buildings and places – like Scollay Square, the West End, and the Brook Farm – could bring the past alive more dramatically than signs. The Freedom Trail has enjoyed enormous success as a wayfinding and interpretive system. Other neighborhoods might find ways of connecting their historic and cultural spaces through “charm bracelets” and other streetscape improvements.

- **Assess the historic impact for major developments.** Develop comprehensive strategies to identify the *impact* on historic resources of economic development in the neighborhoods. Establish standards and processes for infill development in the neighborhoods that insures that such development will be consistent with the historic and other character of the neighborhoods. Develop a comprehensive notification system for the closing or rehabilitation of historic structures. The environment surrounding historic sites.

- **Adopt priorities for redevelopment of historic buildings and sites.** Using the city’s growing database of historic buildings and sites, the City of Boston should determine which redevelopment projects for historic structures and sites should receive priority for funding and other assistance. Under the direction of the Boston Redevelopment Authority’s preservation planning and development specialist and the Boston landmarks Commission, this prioritization should consider a number of factors:

- the historic significance of the structure
- the importance of the structure to the larger environment



- the full range of redevelopment possibilities
- impacts on the neighborhood, and
- adequacy of relevant transportation systems.

- **Establish a single coordinator for preservation development.** Assign Boston Redevelopment Authority staff to oversee a wide range of issues regarding historic resources and development, including: applying identifying opportunities for appropriate development of historic resources, streetscape, capital spending plans, early warning systems (e.g., post office buildings), and other issues. Establish a citywide process of information-sharing and project coordination of all historic structures and related issues. Identify a comprehensive list of the sources of redevelopment funding for different kinds of historic properties. Integrate all casebooks and other materials about government programs into comprehensive databases accessible by computer. Share information about neighborhood historic resources Citywide, with information available on the City's Web page and paper versions available from the BRA and Landmarks Commission. Establish a process in which different City and Commonwealth agencies gather on a quarterly basis to detail existing short- and long-term historic preservation issues, existing projects to address those issues, and future planning. Engage existing programs such as the mayor's Office of Business Services and Main Streets in efforts to develop visions for longterm development of historic resources. Develop a "tool kit" for developers and community groups to use as they consider development and other projects in historic areas.

- **Address the impact of "spot zoning" on historic structures.** Because of the hundreds of development and redevelopment projects in the city, the historic impact of projects is not always presented to zoning officials. All development projects should be subject to a comprehensive analysis of their impact on historic structures and sites. The city's database on historic sites, redevelopment tools, and zoning standards should be consulted before the approval of every development project. The Boston Landmarks Commission should issue a recommendation on the application of every development proposal that involves a historically significant building or site. The BRA's preservation planning and development specialist should convey that recommendation to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

#### **Businesses and institutions should . . .**

- **Develop financial tools that make it easier to rehabilitate existing buildings.** Banks typically determine their risks for inner-city loans from the appraised value of properties. But banks typically determine mortgage amounts for inner-city loans based upon the appraised value; however, buyers of historic structures need rehabilitation funds above and beyond the cost of acquisition. To encourage local lenders, the City should work with secondary-market institutions like the Federal Home Loan Bank to provide lending pools that protect lenders from unnecessary risks and encourage reinvestment in old communities.

#### **Community organizations should . . .**

- **Form creative partnerships with groups throughout the City.** They need to work together to identify the potential for historic enhancement and development in every neighborhood. They need to locate funding and institutional resources. They need to form partnerships with business groups, cultural institutions, schools, colleges and universities, religious institutions. They need to develop projects that exploit the locational and natural advantages of the neighborhoods. Residents develop a deep sense of commitment to their communities when their everyday lives are connected to specific buildings, gardens, and other



spaces. Joint efforts to improve historic and other resources in the neighborhoods could help these institutions as well as their communities.

- **Work with existing programs like Main Streets and the Boston Boulevards**

**Initiative.** Main Streets has established a track record as one of the more creative and grassroots-oriented programs in the city. Although the program primarily aims to improve the business climate of neighborhood retail districts, it has contributed to the enhancement of the larger public realm. To the extent that volunteers and funders commit themselves, Main Streets can develop more programs to improve the historic character of the neighborhoods. The Boston Boulevards Initiative and the Boston Schoolyards Initiative also present important opportunities for historic marking and development. Organizations like Historic Boston and Historic Massachusetts have developed programs for restoration of buildings and districts, as well.

### **Advocacy groups should . . .**

- **Identify projects that combine broader goals of community revitalization with preservation.** It is a truism of preservation that the best way to save a building is to use it. Buildings are most likely to be used when they are part of a vital community, with strong connections to business, residential life, cultural activities, parks and natural spaces, and transportation systems. Every time preservationists identify buildings and historic places to be saved, they should also provide an analysis of how that building could fit into the larger context of the community. In this way, reports such as the *Preservation Revolving Casebook*, prepared by Historic Boston, Inc., would be invaluable for community-builders as well as preservationists. Such analyses could begin to identify allies and funding for preservation projects as well as heighten the relevance of preservation for the larger community.





## SUPPORTING INITIATIVE: FINDING YOUR WAY IN THE CITY

Because of their essential complexity – geographic, institutional, historic – cities require special effort to help residents and visitors find the resources that they want to see and use. The greater a city's resources, the more that city needs to make special efforts to guide people to those resources. Cities like Boston face an ever greater challenge because of their gradual development over time. Unlike Washington, D.C. and Manhattan Island, Boston's street system has no single defining characteristic. The layout changes from the North End to Government Center, from Back Bay to the South End, from Jamaica Plain to Roslindale, from South Boston to Dorchester. While these different layouts create a vibrant individuality in the neighborhoods, they also make it difficult for people to learn the "logic" of Boston. At the very least, cities like Boston need a consistent and comprehensive set of street signs, strategies to identify key districts, a hierarchy of signs to identify major and minor attractions. The city also needs to provide more comprehensive information at key nodes throughout the city, so that residents and visitors can learn about new places as well as find known places.

### Vision

By the time of Boston's 400th anniversary celebrations in 2030, the city will provide a simple and comprehensive system of signage and orientation to help residents and visitors find and discover all of the resources of the city. Street signage will identify street names and special districts at every intersection in the city. Residents and visitors will be guided to the city's myriad attractions – parks, museums and theaters, stadiums and arenas, schools, historic districts, government buildings – with a strong system of marking and signage. In addition, at all of the city's major crossroads will stand attractive orientation centers and kiosks, which will help people to find out about places and activities all over the city and region. Wherever you are in the city, you will be able to learn about places to go – and how to get there by foot, transit, or car.

### Assets and opportunities

Boston has taken the first step toward a citywide orientation system with a **street furniture initiative** that will result in the placement of bus shelters, public toilets, trash bins, and other street furniture throughout the city.

**Other citywide and institutions programs** provide models for implementation of orientation efforts. Main Streets has strengthened the legibility of its 19 Boston districts with attractive signs and banners. The Longwood Medical Area has set a standard for orientation with its street signs, and the New England Aquarium has set a standard for public outreach with the creation of a Big Dig Visitors Center. Each of these systems was established in the absence of a citywide signage plan.

**Businesses support improvements in the quality of the public realm** and to define activity centers better. The city's Main Streets program has provided strong evidence that well-designed, attractive, and legible public places improves the business climate and quality of life for all. Other efforts to improve public spaces – most notably, the development of Post Office Square, the improvements along Harborwalk, and various "adopt-a-square" programs – underscore the importance of public appearances and legibility for business.



## Barriers and challenges

The biggest problem of orientation in Boston is the **scattered approach** followed so far. Many institutions take it upon themselves to provide direction to their facilities. The most visible example is the Longwood Medical Area, which provides distinctive and legible street signs that look nothing like all other street signs in Boston. Visitors sometimes mistakenly think the LMA is not part of the city of Boston because of the area's street signs. Other attractions – like the Franklin Park Zoo, New England Aquarium, Science Museum, Fenway Park – also provide their own signage. Their systems of signage tend to be haphazard and unreliable because they are not included in a larger citywide system of signage.

A second problem of orientation has to do with the lack of what might be called “**off-street**” **orientation**. Visitors and even residents often do not know about the existence of many of the city's economic, cultural, historic, and recreational attractions. At a handful of places near the center of the city – near the Park Street T station, at Copley Square, and near Faneuil Hall and City Hall – visitors can find some rudimentary information centers that provide maps and information about hotels, plays, and other attractions. But even these places do not offer consistent appearances and information to constitute the makings of a system of orientation.

Producing a strong system of signage and orientation is difficult because of the **conflicting needs of jurisdictions and institutions**. The federal, state, and city governments own and operate most of the streets, and each level of government has its own understanding of who they should be serving and how. Quasi-independent authorities like the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan District Commission have their own designs and standards for signage and orientation. Many institutions and neighborhoods desire to create their own “signature” systems that would not be compatible with a citywide system.

**Cost and coordination** pose the final set of challenges to a citywide system of orientation. Completely overhauling the many systems of signage in to one coherent system would be very expensive and may require a bond issue. Even with the necessary funding, a comprehensive effort to improve signage and orientation would require coordination of a number of federal, state, and local officials, as well as major private and nonprofit institutions.

## Actions

### The city should . . .

- **Develop and implement comprehensive standards for signage.** This system should be consistent, distinctive, and clear. Someone looking for information should be able to find it by looking for a common type of sign all over the city. Different kinds of places should be noted with variations on the standard sign. Signs should be visible for both drivers and pedestrians, and they should be visible soon enough to guide people to the destination. [see *SIDE signage*]
- **Build destination centers at Boston's major attractions.** Destination centers should accommodate the hundreds of thousands of people who converge on the major crossroads of the city. Destination centers would provide basic information and maps, as well as museum-like displays about the destination and environs, and dining and other transportation information. As technology advances, ATM-style kiosks could offer ways to book hotel reservations and special telephones could offer audio tours of nearby sights. Current major destinations include the New England Aquarium, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Charles River Esplanade, the U.S.S. Constitution, and the Freedom Trail. Future destinations are likely to be the Boston Harbor



Islands National Park boat launch, the new South Boston Seaport District, and the Franklin Park Zoo.

- **Build orientation kiosks at neighborhood crossroads throughout the city.** Because visitors enter Boston from all directions and residents are based in all sections of the city, there is a need for orientation devices all over. Community activity centers – such as Mattapan Square, Upham’s Corner, Kenmore Square, Cleary Square, and Roslindale Village – should provide basic orientation with maps and brochures. These kiosks ideally would include computer terminals with data on events, places, directions, as well as a telephone hookup to operators with knowledge of Boston’s activities and places. The City of Boston developed a model for this project in 1999 when it installed ATM-style kiosks all over Boston where residents can transact basic business such as paying taxes and parking fines.



## **SUPPORTING INITIATIVE: PERFORMANCE SPACES IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS**

Students of urban life have commented that cities are great places of theater – places where people are free to shed their identities and become something new, if only for the life of a festival or celebration. But the need for artistic and theatrical expression goes far beyond the everyday life of streets and parks. People of all ages need special places where they can perform. In all neighborhoods, people need a way to express and develop themselves in theater, music, dance, debate, lectures, community meetings, and civic presentations. The public realm requires not only good spaces open to all kinds of expression – the “public square” – but also spaces that can accommodate specific kinds of expression.

### **Vision**

By the time of Boston’s fourth centennial, assure that every neighborhood in the city has the facilities it needs to promote a rich cultural and civic life for people of all ages. Working with efforts to rehabilitate or construct new school buildings, enhance the citywide and neighborhood park systems, enhance transit areas, and build neighborhood “charm bracelets,” make sure that every community enjoys easy access to spaces for all kinds of cultural, artistic, and civic expression. When possible, build these performance spaces into existing buildings.

### **Assets and opportunities**

Boston’s neighborhoods have a wealth of cultural and artistic programs that provide the opportunities for young and old to be active players in the cultural scene. Boston has 16,000 resident artists and 25 nonprofit cultural organizations. Attendance at major arts venues has grown dramatically as a new generation of cultural leaders has brought modern approaches to curatorship, events, and marketing. The Museum of Fine Arts draws 1.5 million visitors a year and has announced plans to expand its facility on Huntington Avenue. Other institutions – the Wang Center, Gardner Museum, Boston Ballet, Huntington Avenue Theater, Strand Theater, Riverside Theaterworks, Boston Center for the Arts, Museum of the National Center for Afro-American Artists, and Dance Umbrella – have increased their profile in the city as well. Universities and conservatories pump life into their communities and cultural realms. The number of films shot in Boston has more than doubled in recent years, employing thousands in part-time jobs and heightening the city’s cultural profile internationally. Boston has also become Boston is also the hub of culture for New England. Massachusetts itself is home to 2,693 arts, humanities, and interpretive science organizations and 336 local cultural councils. A 1996 survey found that the nonprofit cultural industry produces an annual economic impact of \$2.56 billion and helps the state to attract 28 million tourists a year.

Many community groups have developed innovative approaches to facility issues. The Riverside Theaterworks in Hyde Park, for example, makes its space available for other community events and demand is high; the organization’s unique payment plan, based on a percentage of ticket sales, makes it affordable to more groups than would a flat fee.

The city also has a strong physical infrastructure of schools, community centers, theaters, concert halls, and other public performance and meeting spaces. Bostonians have shown an interest in expanding the community performance spaces however they can. Community activists





worked for years to create the new Boston Arts Academy, which opened in September 1998. In preparation for a festival of films produced by students, Charlestown residents turned out on a weekend in June 1999 to renovate the auditorium at the Warren Prescott School.

The city's master plan for cultural affairs will provide a strong agenda for public, private, and nonprofit groups all over the city.

## Barriers and challenges

The city offers **inadequate spaces for performance, rehearsals, and administration**. Many cultural organizations experience difficulty finding spaces for their performances, and the better performance spaces are overburdened. Cultural leaders say the city needs more middle-sized performance spaces all over the city for the community-based arts to flourish. Existing facilities are often inadequate in terms of comfort – seating, views, amenities – as well as backstage spaces and equipment. Cultural organizations report that finding practice space is often even more difficult than finding performance spaces. Many organizations must cart around their equipment to practices at churches and schools – not only an inconvenience, but also damaging to expensive investments in instruments, sets, and other supplies.

**Coordination of cultural and artistic programs is minimal** in Boston, creating unnecessary duplication of effort and a lack of access to theaters and other settings for programming. Museums, colleges and universities, theaters and musical organizations, libraries, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies do not have an active civic organization to facilitate planning. In the private-oriented cultural environment of Boston, institutions are hard-pressed to pursue their own financial and programming needs let alone than contribute to citywide efforts.

The **design of many potential performance spaces** is uninviting. In many cities and towns, public school buildings offer the principle venues for community theater and music. But many Boston school buildings that are intended to serve as community gathering places – like the English School in Jamaica Plain and the Hennigan School in Mission Hill – do not present an accessible “face” to the community and are difficult to navigate internally. Other schools’ performance spaces are outdated. Inadequate space in auditoriums, outdated practice facilities and storage spaces, and deficient maintenance make it hard for community groups to pursue their artistic endeavors.

The **costs of cultural programs** makes rental of spaces impossible for many community organizations. By its very nature, cultural and artistic expression of “labor intensive” – that is, it requires constant supervision and management as well as teaching and coaching. Running programs for theater, music, and studio art is expensive, squeezing arts organizations’ funds for performance spaces.

The **subpar quality of performance spaces** subtly undermines efforts of community groups to build audiences for their productions. In an age of many entertainment choices – video, cable television, and computers – audiences are more finicky about acoustics, sightlines, seating, restrooms, and box-office service hours. To make the experience of going to the theater or concert hall more enticing, Boston’s arts organizations must be able to offer the level of comfort and convenience found at other entertainment venues. The problem is exacerbated by excessive booking of performance spaces, since overuse makes it harder to maintain the buildings – and shabby facilities discourage cultural patrons.



**Questions of legal liability** impede open access to performance spaces in the neighborhoods. School children at some schools are not allowed to use nearby parks during school hours – even when the school lacks adequate play space and the park is unused – because of questions about what agency or entity would be liable for damages should accidents occur. In most cases, agreements on liability can be developed among agencies, separate agreements for particular schools and parks are cumbersome for already overburdened school administrators.

**Access to cultural institutions is inadequate.** Public transportation provides inadequate access to major and minor cultural venues throughout the city. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority does not have a strategic approach to dealing with the transportation needs of cultural institutions or the tourist industry, despite the powerful role of their activities in the economic life of the city and region. Most efforts to address transportation needs are private, lacking the collective marketing and operational power that a coordinated effort might bring. Shuttles for the Museum of Fine Arts have been successful, but they are limited to easing the traffic and parking problems associated with major shows such as the Picasso and Monet exhibits. A shuttle system for the Franklin Park Zoo failed to attract enough riders to reduce congestion or traffic problems in the area. Many nearby residents and park users did not even know of the shuttle's existence. Neighborhood theaters and music organizations have expressed a desire to maintain the community "feel" of their programs while at the same time encouraging other city residents to attend. But transportation is often unreliable during off-peak hours when theaters are open.

## **Actions**

### **The state should . . .**

- **Devise legal protections to encourage agencies and institutions to share spaces.**

Because of legal and financial burdens associated with sharing spaces with other organizations, many performance and practice spaces stand idle at times when educational and cultural organizations need them the most. Development of a standards agreement that allows for greater sharing of theaters, concert halls, studios, and storage facilities would give Boston's cultural communities the resources they need to make the most out of the city's resources. The Boston Public Schools and Boston Community Centers should be at the forefront of this process, but should also be joined by churches, business spaces, colleges and universities, and union halls.

- **Design new civic buildings to provide flexibility in programming.** The effort to build new schools for the next generation provides an historic opportunity to expand space for cultural programming. With the Mayor's vision of lifelong and daylong learning as a guide, new schools should be designed to provide spaces for a wide range of community groups. School buildings should not only provide adequate space for community cultural activities, but they should also be designed to make a strong physical connection with their neighborhoods. Buildings should look inviting, with an open look and landscape designs that blend school grounds with the larger public realm. These spaces should be coordinated on a citywide basis by a coordinator based in the Office of Cultural Affairs, with the assistance of public agencies and private organizations.

### **The city should . . .**

- **Identify the specific cultural space needs of all communities.** Building on the 1999 survey conducted by the Office of Cultural Affairs, every neighborhood should develop a site needs assessment that is updated every two years. The Office of Cultural Affairs should publish a



set of criteria that explain how site needs should be determined and provided over the long term. The data gathered in this process should be made available to the public on the Internet and neighborhood associations and other community organizations should be invited to make proposals for additions to their facilities every year.

- **Maintain a database for all cultural spaces.** Boston 400 and the Office of Cultural Affairs developed a database that lists all meeting, performance, and office spaces throughout the city. This database should be updated weekly by a cultural site coordinator in the Office of Cultural Affairs. Reserving space in public and nonprofit buildings all over the city should be streamlined so that groups can find the spaces they need quickly and efficiently.

- **Design new civic buildings to provide flexibility in programming.** The City will spend hundreds of millions of dollars in the next generation building schools, community centers, health centers, early-learning centers, and other public facilities. If designed for a wide range of uses, these structures can provide much of the space that community groups need for the performing arts.









## **BSYI: Building on Existing Assets**

The Boston Schoolyards Initiative, established in 1995 to improve outdoors learning and play spaces in Boston's public schools, has typified the Menino Administration's philosophy of building on existing community resources. Rather than building brand-new facilities, the Schoolyards Initiative aims to improve the spaces that families and children already use. Kirk Meyer, the director of the program, explains this approach to community-building:

Until recently, however, we have ignored what are arguably the most valuable and important open spaces in Boston — public schoolyards. Schools surrounded by barren wastelands of cracked and aging asphalt send an undeniably negative message to students about how we value them and their external environment. If children represent the future, then the long-term sustainability of our cities is directly related to how we foster a sense of environmental awareness among today's youth.

The Boston Schoolyard Initiative is a model for promoting community-driven sustainable development, environmental stewardship, responsible public policy, and outdoor experimental education in the Boston Public Schools. This five-year public-private partnership, funded by the City of Boston and a collaborative of local foundations, is revitalizing Boston's underutilized schoolyards. The project incorporates a participatory design process in which groups of parents, students, teachers, school administrators, custodians, local residents, business, and community-based organizations design improvements to their school grounds with the help of contracted landscape architects.

As a result, we have created outdoor classrooms and creative play spaces where students can gather for recreation and engage in hands-on learning activities such as gardening, mapping and measuring, orienting, drama productions, art, music and poetry writing. Teachers, students, community-based educators, and neighborhood youth programs that have been part of the development process become stakeholders with an interest in utilizing the new schoolyard for a variety of activities.

Involvement in the design phase has encouraged educators to be proactive in constructing schoolyard improvements that will make environmental lesson activities easy to conduct. The establishment of clearly defined areas, the routing of pedestrian traffic, the separation of active and passive gathering spots, and the creation of stages, amphitheaters, natural areas, or gardens are providing an infrastructure that encourages multiple opportunities for creative play and academic learning.



## **Kinds of public art**

*(This sidebar will be a page or possible 1 2/2 or 2 pages. It will have this brief intro with lots of hopefully color photos; the photos should be thumbnails, small so we can get lots on the page—probably 2x2's, the captions will identify where the examples of art can be found)*

Artistic expression plays a critical role in the definition of neighborhoods all over the city. At its best, public art reflects the character and aspirations of the community, as well as the history that created the community.

Public art should meet high standards, but at the same time should never be defined narrowly. Public art is more than statues. It also includes a wide range of sculptures, monuments, plaques and other interpretive materials, creatively designed street furniture, gateways and fencing, building details, art display cases, murals, water fountains and pools, inspired uses of light, landscaping, decorative facades with distinctive building materials, and even special sidewalk and boardwalk design.

Boston already boasts a great diversity of public art – the statues along Commonwealth Avenue Mall, the Downtown monuments to Hungarian nationalists and Irish famine victims, the Don Quixote sculpture on the Boston Common, the Fenway war memorials, the Villa Victoria mural in the South End, the head statue at the National Center for Afro-American Artists, the Louis Brown memorial in Dorchester, the Chinatown gateway, the 54th Civil War Regiment frieze, the Boston University monument to Martin Luther King, the University of Massachusetts sculpture garden, and wind sculptures in the Financial District and the New England Aquarium.

On this page are images of several different kinds of public art that can be found all over Boston. As Bostonians consider what kind of an identity they want to express for their neighborhoods, they may consider the possibilities of adapting these kinds of expression to their own histories and cultures.



## **Public Art funding**

Since the founding and development of major museums and cultural institutions in Boston, the city government has not played an active role in funding or coordinating culture and the arts. The Museum of Fine Arts, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art, the New England Aquarium, the Children's Museum, and the Museum of African American Artists have always been self-sustaining.

A number of other cities make major efforts to fund and coordinate the arts. A brief look:

✓ In San Francisco, a flat 2 percent of the gross estimated construction cost for all new civic buildings, major building renovations, transportation projects new parks and other structures like bridges goes to artwork. Twenty percent of the funds acquired is set aside for the cost of actually running the program, while the remaining money goes to the pieces themselves. Revisions of the city's public art ordinance in 1996 permit the pooling of art enrichment funds with other city departments. The revisions also call for 5 percent of the funds be dedicated to maintaining existing artwork. These funds are placed in an interest bearing account so that an endowment can be established for future conservation.

✓ In Chicago, 1.33 percent of funds for constructing or renovating municipal buildings are set aside for the commission or purchase of art. Public Advisory Committees, which represent a broad range of Chicago residents, select the art and a Commission of representatives from "the art world" then must approve these selections. The city also maintains a slide registry of all public art in Chicago. Additionally, the Chicago Public Art Program has organized several special projects to showcase the city's cultural attractions, including a photographic mural by Chicago photographers and an exhibit of historic stained-glass windows collected from Chicago buildings at O'Hare International Airport.

✓ The City of Albuquerque's Art in Municipal Places Ordinance provides that 1 percent of General Obligation Bond Funds approved for capital expenditures can be authorized for the commission, execution, and installation of works of art. Between 15 and 20 percent of these funds are directed toward conservation and maintenance of public art. Albuquerque depends also upon private and public donations of artwork and money in addition to the city's Urban Enhancement Trust Fund. This fund sets aside money "for beautification and cultural projects that enhance the ambiance of the City." Citizens, neighborhood organizations and cultural groups which have a vision for a particular project can submit applications to receive grants from this fund.

✓ The public art program in Portland, run by the Regional Arts and Cultural Council, coordinates efforts for the whole metropolitan area. The program includes a 1.33 percent levy for art for all major city construction projects. One of Portland's innovative initiatives is Blank Wall Guidelines, which considers public art as an alternative to meeting the City of Portland Building Code's ground floor window requirements. The Public Art selection and installation process is run by a Committee of arts professionals appointed by the Mayor; a subcommittee considers individual proposals. (The smaller committee usually is made up mostly of arts professionals but also includes one citizen who "may be from the neighborhood in question.") The RACC maintains a computer database of all artworks owned by the city and county. A fraction of RACC funds is allocated for maintenance of these pieces. Portland also has a policy for withdrawing artwork which is no longer appreciated by the public.



## Redevelopment challenges

Dozens of historic buildings all over Boston offer the opportunity for rehabilitation and reuse, but many of the structures have been allowed to deteriorate to the point that they are endangered. Raising the needed money and adhering to strict redevelopment standards are the major challenges facing preservation efforts.

A 1999 survey of historic properties by Historic Boston, Inc., highlighted 40 properties across the city that are in danger of being lost to structural deficiencies that come with years of disuse or neglect. The buildings face a number of challenges, such as:

✓ **Damage to historic features from poor conversion.** Rehabilitation of historic structures without adequate understanding of the detailing and functions that make the buildings special could ruin structures even when they remain in use. The facades of the Allston Hall Block in Allston and Eblana Brewery/Hampden Auto Parts in Mission Hill have been damaged by unthoughtful rehabbing.

✓ **Shape, footprint, and location of building.** The odd shapes of buildings often owe to the peculiar circumstances and location of their construction. With demanding rehabilitation code standards, retrofitting these structures for new purposes can be costly. The location near highways and other destructive activities often hurts buildings' prospects for rehabilitation, as well. Examples of buildings in this category include 119 Merrimac Street (The Flatiron Building) and Adams House/Bijou Theater in the Downtown, Upham's Corner Market in Dorchester, Eustice Street firehouse in Roxbury, and the Suffolk County Jail in the West End.

✓ **Competing economic and building imperatives.** Often, government agencies, preservationists, and community groups cannot agree on the best use for a building. A lack of consensus has made redevelopment difficult for the Herter center and Chestnut Hill Reservoir pump houses in Allston-Brighton; the Adams House/Bijou Theater Downtown; the Baker Mill Powerhouse in Dorchester; the Joseph Barnes School in East Boston; the Home for Aged Couples and Pinebank in Jamaica Plain; Gloucester Memorial Presbyterian Church Complex, Houghton Vienna Brewery, and the Mission Church complex in Mission Hill; the Roslindale Substation in Roslindale; the Hibernian Hall and Hotel Dartmouth in Roxbury; the Old Northern Avenue Bridge in South Boston; the Hotel Alexandra in the South End; and the Court Square Press Building in South Boston.

✓ **Deterioration due to weather or fire damage.** Years without maintenance can bring about rapid deterioration with snow, rain, sun, and wind. Structures that have been damaged by the elements include Modern Theater, Opera House, and Paramount Theater Downtown; Everett Hall Theater in Hyde Park; Highland Spring Brewery in Mission Hill; the Elevated Railway Central Power Station in the South End; and Print Shop at Brook Farm in West Roxbury.

✓ **Inadequate maintenance and resources.** Lack of attention can lead to an accumulation of damages to buildings. Examples include the Bay Village townhouse in the South End, Hoosic Store No. 3 in Charlestown, the old Quincy School in Chinatown, the Calf Pasture Pumping Station at Columbia Point in Dorchester, Christ Church of Hyde Park, St. Stephen's Church in the North End, Alvah Kittredge House and Alvah Kittredge Park rowhouses in Roxbury, and Sts. Peter and Paul Church in South Boston.

✓ **Need for environmental remediation.** Environmental damage due to dangerous building materials or disposal of toxins on the site often make the cost of renovation prohibitive. The Boston Sanatorium in Mattapan, which has asbestos problems, is a prime example.

For more information about these sites, see *Preservation Revolving Fund Casebook 1999*, published by Historic Boston, Inc. Call (617) 227-4679 for more information.





## SIDE Rehab pays

The historic preservation movement began as an effort by a small band of activists to save history from the wrecking balls of new development. The movement focused on buildings and public spaces with significant architecture or where important historic events had taken place. But in recent years, the preservation movement has become a major approach to promoting community, minority empowerment, and home-grown businesses.

Traditional preservationists have played a major role in protecting the heritage of the United States. Their efforts focused on old mansions and estates, houses, hotels and apartment buildings, post offices, court houses, and storefronts. The movement has also saved historic relics that have taken on an iconic character, such as the Citgo sign in Kenmore Square.

But in the last generation, preservationists have confronted urban renewal, large-scale development, and highways and other projects. By addressing these larger concerns, preservationism has become a sophisticated strategy for reviving whole neighborhoods. Strategic preservation has turned many urban neighborhoods around in Boston. The conversion of the old Baker Chocolate Factory was critical to the revival of Lower Mills in Dorchester.

Studies have shown that preservationism not only improves the overall character of a community, but actually delivers a greater economic impact than new development. A major study called *The Economics of Preservation* found major benefits in spending \$1 million for rehabilitation instead of \$1 million for new construction, including:

- ✓ \$120,000 more dollars will initially stay in the community.
- ✓ Five to nine more construction jobs will be created.
- ✓ 4.7 more additional jobs will be created elsewhere in the community.
- ✓ Household incomes will increase \$107,000 more.
- ✓ Retail sales will increase by \$142,000, \$34,000 more than new construction.

Besides generating economic activity that tends to stay closer to home, also leaves more money in local hands for investment in employment and future development. Startup businesses are especially attracted to old buildings, which require less money for rents and purchase.

Rehabilitation takes advantage of existing infrastructure. Roads, transit routes, utilities, retail centers, warehouses, and other facilities are already in place and usually require less public investment to bring up to the needs of businesses and residents than brand-new development.

Rehabilitation also dramatically increases the character of a community. A community's historic character attracts visitors, businesses, and new residents who are seeking a more "authentic" neighborhood life. Neighborhoods like Beacon Hill, Charlestown, Back Bay, the North End, South Boston, and parts of Dorchester and Roxbury have improved property values and local economic activity by rehabbing buildings to create more richly textured community environments.

Redevelopment of existing structures is a critical part of an anti-sprawl strategy. Many old buildings not only offer opportunities for reuse, but are also located near vacant parcels where new construction is appropriate. The creation of a mix of old and new buildings offers an alternative to new development in communities further and further from the center of the city.

Because of both economic and social benefits, the noted economist John Kenneth Galbraith has praised the preservation movement's impact. "The preservation movement has one great curiosity," Galbraith once remarked. "There is never retrospective controversy or regret. Preservationists are the only people in the world who are invariably confirmed in their wisdom after the fact."



## SIDE Rehab subcode

Renovating old buildings to meet today's goals of safety, health, and accessibility is one of the major challenges facing older cities like Boston. A new code developed by a New Jersey state agency provides a model to reduce the costs and time required for rehabilitation of existing structures without sacrificing safety.

This innovation in urban redevelopment should be emulated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston. Its adoption would create powerful new incentives for investment in the city.

The new "rehab subcode" in New Jersey establishes a separate code that allows for greater reuse of old buildings. In its first year, the rehab subcode contributed to a 50 percent increase in renovation projects in the state's major cities. Rehabilitation spending increased 83 percent in the first year of the new code in Jersey City, 59 percent in Newark, and 40 percent in Trenton. The new code, in effect, opens up many inner-city neighborhoods for development for the first time.

For a century, the code for rehabilitating buildings has been tied to the code for construction of new buildings. Linking code requirements for old and new buildings often undermined efforts to rehabilitate existing structures. Modern standards for doors, windows, ceilings, floors, stairs, setbacks, and fire escapes would require major overhauls of old buildings, with few safety benefits.

As in most American states and cities – including Massachusetts and Boston – the old New Jersey subcode operated with a 25/50 rule. This rule required rehab work worth 25 percent of the building's value to bring the affected parts of the structure up to modern building code. Work worth 50 percent or more of the building's value required bringing the whole structure up to modern building standards.

The 25/50 rule was especially harmful to efforts to improve inner-city buildings and neighborhoods. Because the assessed value of those buildings were low, virtually any significant rehab work required bringing the whole building to new-building standards. That is too much for most developers, especially when the real-estate market is hot and other opportunities are available elsewhere.

The key to the code's success is allowing alternatives to new building code standards to achieve the same goals. For example:

- ✓ Sprinkler systems are allowed to protect against the dangers of fire, instead of additional exits and fire escapes.
- ✓ Door widths, windows, and stairs dimensions are allowed to fall short of the standards for new buildings.
- ✓ Smaller setbacks are allowed for buildings.
- ✓ Sagging floors can be fixed with the use of materials that fill in the floor rather than requiring major improvements in the columns that hold up the foundation.
- ✓ Alternative approaches to providing for access for handicapped persons are allowed.
- ✓ Developers are given wide latitude in reusing old buildings for new uses. Garages have been converted to homes, auto dealerships to restaurants and galleries, and warehouses to offices and apartments.

As a result of New Jersey's success, a number of other states and cities have adopted their own version of the code. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is adapting the New Jersey code into a national model. The three major associations that establish regional building standards are also using the New Jersey code as a model for revamping their standards.



## School-building considerations

The city of Boston has a school-age population of about 63,000 students who are taught in 129 school buildings with an average age of \_\_\_ years. Two-thirds of the schools were built before 1945 putting building new school facilities on the agenda for many neighborhoods in Boston. There are a number of considerations that should inform longterm school facility planning, including:

- ✓ **A needs assessment.** The city should assess the different programming needs of elementary, middle, and high schools in the city to determine what types of schools need to be built and with what facilities.
- ✓ **Educational needs.** The design of school buildings should reflect the needs of the school. Different activities need different classrooms. It is necessary to have appropriate spaces for the different classes within the school; art and music must have their own places along with the regular classrooms.
- ✓ **Technology.** Technology is one of the areas in which urban schools are lagging behind their suburban peers. Technology is an integral part of the work world, so must it become an integral part of schools. Schools and classrooms must be designed to support it.
- ✓ **Communities of 200.** Many educators are calling for small schools. The Blue Ribbon Commission's report on schools also calls for middle schools to be between 400-600 students and high schools to be between 300-350 students. Schools larger than this should be subdivided into separate schools.
- ✓ **Multi-use needs.** Schools are primarily for student learning, but they also can be used for other related activities, such as after-school programs, adult education courses, community meeting space, and providing meals to students and perhaps their parents. This idea has caught on in many Boston communities where there are Community Learning Centers. In a school system where 71% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, providing other meals at school would likely be a real benefit to the student. Even without supplying anything extra, having a place open for students to study would help students who do not have a place to study at home.
- ✓ **Adaptability of internal spaces for re-use.** Educational philosophy is continually changing and improving. The schools that are built now need to have flexible spaces so that the rooms can adapt with changing program needs of the school. There need to be flexible classrooms, to accommodate large and small groups; and flexible buildings where schools can be divided into smaller schools or clusters. The new demands on schools as community learning centers also demands more flexible work spaces to accommodate the different activities.
- ✓ **Connections to community spaces.** In a dense urban area like Boston, there are many other public spaces of which the a school could take advantage, such as nearby parks, libraries, historic sites and community centers. Often these spaces are abutting and should also have some continuity between the spaces. The library and the elementary school should have a connection so that the open space around the library and the school can be common space for user of either institutions.
- ✓ **Block size.** One aspects of the urban environment that makes a livable city is block size. Small blocks provide the most efficient way for people to walk around the city. They also contribute to the safety of the blocks by increasing their usage. State requirements for new schools currently and unnecessarily call for more space than can be found in a city and would



destroy the scale of the neighborhood in which the school is being built. Preserving small blocks needs to be a priority when designing new schools.

✓ **Parking.** Schools usually require some parking for faculty and staff who have no access to public transportation. This can be a challenge in an urban area. Creating parking for new schools must be done in such a way as to preserve the urban fabric of the area. Some solutions could be to restrict on-street parking through special school permits during the times when teachers might need to park, or building underground parking beneath already existing school buildings.

✓ **Convenient access to mass transit.** One way to alleviate the parking problem is to have better access to public transportation from the school. This is an important criteria in the choosing the placement of a new school, but it is also an issue for existing schools. Some possible ideas to improve existing schools include creating shuttles that run from nearby subway stations, or putting schools on area bus routes and running extra buses at the beginning and end of every school day.

Many factors complicate the placement of schools throughout the city. The school committee is in the process of evaluating the desegregation policies which will influence the placement of any new schools, as will the changing demographics of city and neighborhood population. The current distribution of facilities across the city influences the locations of the new facilities, but these decisions are somewhat limited by the availability of parcels for development.





## Signage

Providing good signage for residents, commuters, and visitors requires coordination of a number of public, nonprofit, and private groups.

A number of characteristics are needed for a system, of good signage:

✓ **Simplicity.** The city now suffers from a confusing collection of different sign styles and combinations. The uneven quality of the signs stems in part from the many different agencies and institutions that post signs – federal, state, and city agencies, hospitals, universities, museums, and historic districts. Some signs are informative and well-placed, but others are illegible and randomly placed. *Pics of great & awful signs*

✓ **Layering.** To keep signs as simple but also as informative as possible, signs need an elegant system of layering. For example, some districts might desire special designation on street signs – which would be possible with a consistent format of edges to basic signs. The new signs along Huntington Avenue for the Avenue of the Arts could be a model for marking districts in the city. Development of a district “layer” could help improve neighborhood identity while at the same time making neighborhoods feel less isolated from the rest of the city.

✓ **Comprehensiveness.** In a city like Boston with literally hundreds of attractions for residents and visitors alike, it is probably impossible to rely on street signs to guide people to each major park, museum, hospital, school or university, and historic district. But public signs should guide all drivers and walkers to the major sections of the city, and all of the major destinations should be targeted within their districts. A layered system should help people connect to the right area of the city, with signs inside the district directing people to specific destinations.

✓ **Follow-up.** Many signs promise the viewer an attraction that is in fact many miles away – and then provide little or no additional assistance for the person following the signs. Drivers entering the Fenway from Storrow Drive, for example, see a sign for Franklin Park. But since Franklin Park lies four miles away on a confusing route of twisting and turning roads, the sign is more confusing than helpful.

✓ **Consistency.** Road signs should be provided at most if not all of the intersections along major streets. Travelers along major streets like Washington Street, Melnea Cass Boulevard, Blue Hill Avenue, and Columbia Road only see signs at the endpoints of the major streets, but should see them at intersections along the way. In a city that attracts so many short-term residents, workers, and visitors, knowledge of even the major streets should never be assumed. *Pic of streetsign at intersection*

✓ **Information at the nodes.** The system of street signage should be complemented by a system of information kiosks throughout the city. The kiosks should offer detailed maps of the immediate vicinity, marking all major destinations. The kiosks should also provide a citywide map placing the district into larger perspective. *Pic of st furn model*

✓ **Accuracy.** Many signs in the city are inaccurate. The Boston Transportation Department has adopted a new database system to keep track of sign location and repair needs. This database system should improve the location and maintenance of signs. Information from the database should be shared with other jurisdictions that bear responsibility for signage, such as the U.S. Highway Administration, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the Metropolitan District Commission.











---

## **The road to 2030**

Implementation strategies





## The road to 2030

Predicting the future – much less, planning the future – seems like an audacious undertaking in our high-speed technological times. One generation ago, no one could have predicted the development of desktop or laptop computers, the proliferation of the Internet, the boom in biotechnology, or the stock market reaching the dizzying heights of 10,000. One generation ago, few would even have predicted Boston's economic boom, socioeconomic diversity, or the revitalization of the Boston Harbor and other great natural spaces.

As important as it is to understand some of the trends that are shaping our society, there is no need for planners to predict what industries will rise and fall or what cultural trends will hold sway. Good planning does not require scripting the future, but preparing the conditions for the future to unfold according to the needs and logic of future times.

Human needs change little over time. Generation after generation, people have the same requirements for everyday life – no matter what kinds of economic, demographic, political, and social changes occur.

People need a place to live. They need a neighborhood that provides economic and social networks. They need transportation systems to connect them to job opportunities, friends and family, social services, educational opportunities, and cultural attractions. They need other elements of infrastructure as well – water, sewers, electricity, and roads. They need civic spaces where they can exercise their bodies, train their minds, meet their friends and family, and excite their artistic imagination. They need places to buy a wide range of goods and services – in their neighborhood, in their city, and beyond.

It is the foundation of a city that makes the city <sup>an</sup> attractive place to live and work, and which provides the basic support that people need to raise a family, start a business, and engage the community. Strengthening the public realm is the key to any community's longterm prosperity and opportunity. The public realm consists of the places that people all over the city share in common – streets and sidewalks, public transit, utilities, parks and natural spaces, schools and libraries, community business districts, <sup>and</sup> residential communities.

In the next generation, the challenge to Boston is to strengthen and nurture this public realm. The public realm will serve the city's future well when it has four qualities:

- **Authentic.** In the age of the Internet, people and businesses can locate almost wherever they choose. Boston is a prime example of the mobility of modern America. More than half of Boston's population did not live in the city five years before. Business startups. Because of this fluidity, Boston always faces the challenge of making itself more attractive to outsiders as well as existing residents.
- **Efficient.** In a time of economic mobility, providing a modern infrastructure is an essential strategy for promoting economic development. Infrastructure – streets and highways, transit, schools and community centers, parks, universities, museums and cultural attractions – is vital to making the city a convenient and attractive place to live and work. The more efficient the city can make transactions throughout the city, the greater competitive advantage it can offer to businesses and others that make the city <sup>call it</sup> home.
- **Open.** All modern societies require the provision of private spaces for businesses, researchers, and ordinary people. Privacy is important for the development of economic innovation and the efficient allocation of goods and services. Privacy is also important for families: Parents need a special zone where they can raise their children and pursue their own



goals and passions. But as important as private spaces are for everyone, cities like Boston also need vibrant public spaces. From the time of Aristotle, philosophers have understood the importance of the public realm for all levels of the community to realize their greatest potential. Schools, parks, public buildings, roads and transit, cultural institutions – all provide important ways for people to enlarge themselves. Cities like Boston need to provide their citizens with public places <sup>where</sup> they can explore challenges that are bigger than their own family or firm.

- **Equitable.** Fair access to the full range of opportunities – housing, education, <sup>work</sup> recreation, culture and the arts – is the cornerstone of Boston's vitality. As a matter of basic fairness, Boston owes its citizens nothing less. But the importance of equity goes beyond fairness. As a city of urban villages, the opportunities and vitality of one community directly affects the whole city. The vitality of the whole city depends on making a wide variety of spaces and activities available for all people at all times.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

**New Funding** – In an age of diminishing resources from the federal and state governments, city governments like Boston struggle to meet basic investment needs. Housing, transportation, environmental, and education funding has been cut as <sup>part</sup> of the Federal government's effort to eliminate the budget deficit. But many city-improvement efforts often require significant spending. To bring the city's system of parks and natural spaces to its proper level, the City will have to find millions more dollars a year. Other new funds are needed for housing, school construction, and public transportation. Each of these investments has been demonstrated to provide the city and state with important short- and long-term economic benefits. Each of these investments are also vital to maintaining the economic diversity of the city <sup>by</sup> attracting and keeping the middle class.

**New Partnerships** – Boston has led the nation in its use of partnerships to improve the physical makeup of the city. In recent generations, we have learned that we need to work with communities, other public agencies, and private and nonprofit organizations to get the most out of the city. Partnerships offer the best way to leverage the full range of skills and resources needed to improve the city over the long term.

**Smart Spending** – No matter what decisions the City of Boston makes about its spending priorities, it is already committed to spending tens of millions of dollars on schools and other revitalization projects. But public investments can produce different impacts on the community. Special efforts should be undertaken to insure that all major investments meet strict standards for enhancement of the community's physical spaces.

**Designs for Revitalization** – In good times and bad, businesses and homeowners design their buildings and streetscapes in accord with standards established by city and state agencies. Special efforts should be undertaken by the city to make sure the standards for development of waterfront communities, transit centers, and the Downtown meets standards for vital public places. In addition, the city should pursue an aggressive strategy to make sure that people can find their way in the city through better signage, information kiosks, and gateways to the city and its neighborhoods.



### New Funding

Parks for the Commonwealth	Building on Boston's rich legacy of parks requires major investments. Boston spends less per capita than most other cities. The strains of Boston's employment centers and visitors industry ... ?
Transit for the Next Century	Boston needs new investments to make better connections between existing transit lines and <del>to bring</del> <sup>to</sup> <del>transit</del> to underserved communities. Such investments take years to materialize, so Boston should start now to make the case before state legislators and the MBTA.
Housing for All	It will be a struggle for Boston to commit more money to housing, but it is essential to maintain a healthy mix of residents into the next century. Some money can come from sale of City assets, but not enough. The City should lead a national movement for new federal investments in housing. In addition to funding, Boston's housing market would be helped with revisions in the rehabilitation code and auctions of vacant lots for development.
Protecting Boston's Natural Spaces	A number of Boston's most precious natural spaces are privately owned. Protecting them – for the sake of the environment and Bostonians who use them – requires an infusion of new funds. Special partnerships, land swaps, and payments in lieu of taxes can also contribute to the protection of natural spaces.
Investing in Boston's Environment	From the cleanup of rivers and brownfields to the redesign and maintenance of parks, playgrounds, playing fields, gardens, and urban wilds, only a new stream of funding for Boston's natural spaces can realize the city's potential as a world-class natural city.
Playing Fields for the Next Century	Boston's children and adults need more places to play competitive athletics. The shortage of fields comes with the expansion of organized leagues, the growing participation of girls and women in competitive sports, and the arrival of new immigrants in the city. Playing fields need to be coordinated better, but the greatest need is for more fields and better maintenance.

### New Partnerships

Charm Bracelets	Working with community organizations, the City should develop partnerships to connect the parks, public buildings, historic sites, and other important civic spaces into a continuous system. Strategic plans for path improvements, signage, landscaping, façade and fencing
-----------------	---



	improvements could create a series of special “charm bracelets” throughout the city.
Art in public places	Working with community groups, the City should develop strategic plans for the acquisition and placement of public art in all neighborhoods.
Gateways to the City and its Neighborhoods	Using the NICE program and other City funds, gateways should be built at every major entry point into the city as well as major destinations and neighborhood entryways.
Performances Centers in the Community	All over the city, the artistic urge needs a place where acting troupes, musicians, performance artists, speakers, and others can give neighborhoods local culture. From school-age children to seniors, live performance is a vital part of cultural life. When possible, these performance centers can be built into Boston’s new generation of schools.
Fueling Boston’s Economic Engine	To nurture home-grown enterprise, the city should create partnerships with specific industries to develop “incubators” for new business firms. The incubators should provide a wide range of support services, as well as “hothouse” environments where innovations tend to develop.

### Smart Spending

Schools for the Next Generation	The City will invest as much as half a billion dollars over the next generation <del>over the next generation</del> to build a new generation of schools. The challenge is to build facilities that not only provide havens of learning for young people, but also connect the school to the life of the community and offer opportunities for lifelong learning. The City should negotiate with the Commonwealth to have the right to build schools that fit Boston’s urban context rather than the suburban-oriented standards set by state regulations.
Preservation for Development	Boston contains a wealth of historic buildings that could play a dynamic role in revitalizing neighborhoods and business districts. Coordination of <del>development</del> to promote <del>development and development of</del> alternate standards for rehabilitating existing structures is critical to the success of neighborhood-level revitalization.

### Designs for Revitalization

Transit-Centered Urban Villages	Boston is the nation’s original city for “transit-oriented development.” Many of the city’s transit stations and
---------------------------------	--





	their surrounding communities, however, are poorly designed. To promote transit use – and to provide housing and commercial spaces that people throughout the city say they want – it is vital to create land-use plans and urban design standards that strengthen the character of these areas and make transit use more attractive.
Designs for Development	Most businesses know that the appearance of their commercial district is critical to their overall volume of business. People are more likely to visit a business establishment when it <del>provides a</del> <sup>is surrounded by a</sup> pleasant, walkable streetscape. Boston 400 proposes that the City build on its success with the Boston Main Streets program with more rigorous development standards.
Communities Connected by Water	To promote responsible development of communities near Boston Harbor and the city's five rivers, the City should develop new overlay districts to coordinate the public agencies, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and businesses – and to set strict standards for development in the area.
Hub of the Hub	To create a greater sense of “place” Downtown, the City should improve the character of signature streets, strengthen the focal points throughout the area, and develop long-term plans for eliminating barriers to walkers in the area.
Finding Your Way in the City	To help Bostonians and visitors alike orient themselves throughout Boston, the City should improve signage and place information kiosks and maps in all neighborhoods.
Regional Traffic that Protects Community	Working with state agencies and authorities, the City should develop a strong street hierarchy that channels major traffic away from neighborhood streets and centers.

No one can predict the future, but we do know the power of our people, the legacy of our past, and the basic elements of community that will build on our strengths as a city in the generations ahead. Now is the time for all of the people of Boston to come together to realize the vision of Boston as a network of urban villages.



---

# APPENDIX

Sample page of the report

Sample generalized zoning map

Six samples of the "activity center maps"

List of "activity center maps" to be included in Appendix of final report





In January of 1997, Mayor Thomas M. Menino asked the Boston Redevelopment Authority to oversee the development of a citywide plan. The Mayor made two provisos. First, he told the BRA to actively seek the involvement from people all over the city, so that the plan's agenda would reflect the imagination and strengths of all of the city's neighborhoods. Second, he said to be bold.

Boston 400 focuses on the physical elements of the City. Boston 400's mission is to enhance and connect what we call the "public realm," the spaces and systems that we all share as a community – streets and sidewalks, parks and natural spaces, schools and other civic buildings, commercial districts, cultural and historic resources, universities. By fostering a wide range of improvements and connections between these spaces, we can make Boston a more livable and efficient place in which to live, work, study, and visit. If Boston has a strong and vibrant public realm, then its people can do what they do better. Our job, then, is to provide a foundation.

Since the Mayor initiated the process, Boston 400 has held hundreds of meetings in every neighborhood of the city, with neighborhood groups – and with a wide range of architects and planners, community development activists, parks advocates and environ-

mentalists, transportation and housing experts, cultural leaders and historic preservationists, and economists.

We asked the people of Boston a series of basic questions: What do you want Boston to look like in the year 2030, when the city marks its 400th anniversary? What do you want your neighborhood to look like? Where do you want to go with your family, friends, and neighbors? How can we design and build the kinds of spaces you want in your neighborhoods and throughout the city?

## Boston's unique elements

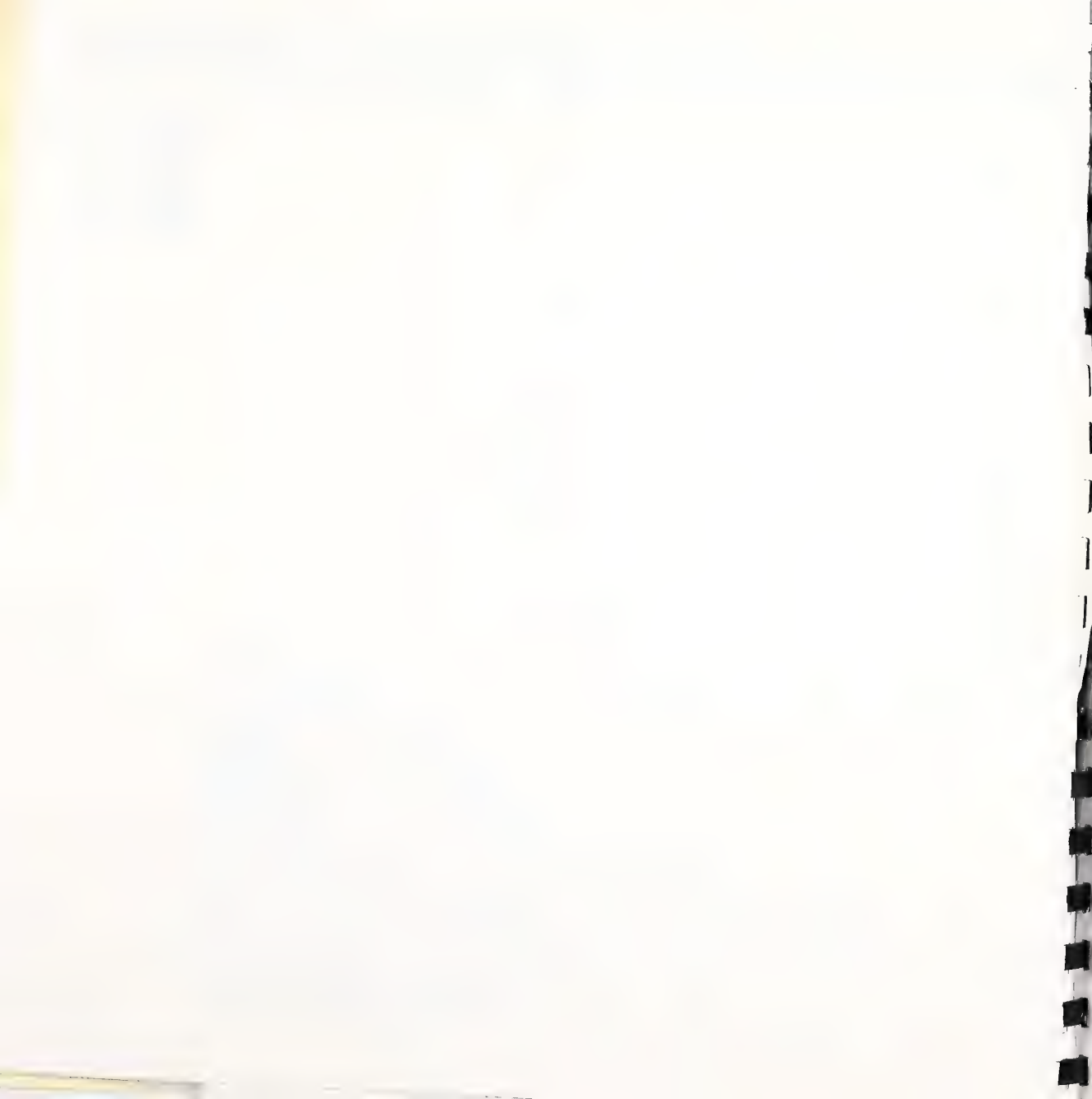
As Boston 400 gathered in civic spaces all over the city – community centers, schools, health centers, churches, bookstores, local businesses, city offices – residents and merchants expressed a compelling vision of Boston's character and promise. They focused on four elements that make Boston a unique place in American life

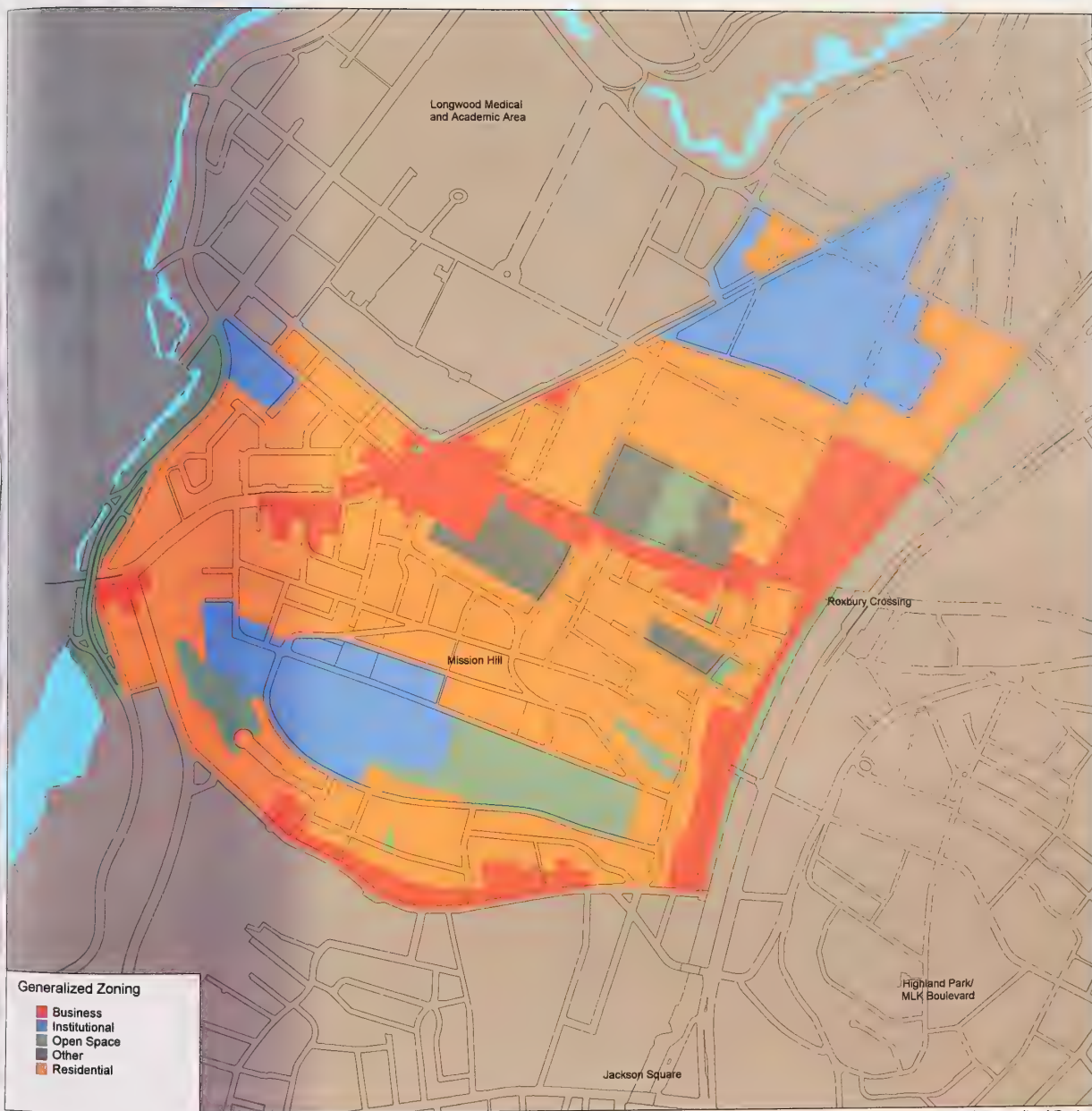
**Boston is a city of neighborhoods.** First and foremost, Boston is a place that offers a variety of grounded and engaging places to live. Most of Boston's neighborhoods originated as parts

of independent cities and towns, which were later annexed to the city, and these communities retain a special character based on history, geography, and economy. The neighborhoods offer a great diversity of housing, transit access to the city and region, vital parks and natural spaces, and great cultural and civic spaces. The neighborhoods also offer comfortable public spaces to walk and explore the city. People from all over are rediscovering Boston's neighborhoods. From the elegant rowhouses of Back Bay and Beacon Hill to the majestic Victorians of Dorchester and Roxbury, from the classic apartment buildings of Fenway and Allston-Brighton to the triple-deckers of Jamaica

What do you want Boston to look like in the year 2030, when the city marks its 400th anniversary? What do you want your neighborhood to look like? Where do you want to go with your family, friends, and neighbors? How can we design and build the kinds of spaces you want in your neighborhoods and throughout the city?







Generalized Zoning

- Business
- Institutional
- Open Space
- Other
- Residential





## LEGEND

	Residential 1 Family Housing
	Residential 2 Family Housing
	Residential 3 Family Housing
	Apartments/Condos
	Residential/Commercial
	Commercial
	Institutional
	Industrial/Manufacturing
	Open Space
	Surface Parking
	Main Streets District
	MBTA Subway Lines
	MBTA Commuter Rail
	MBTA Bus Routes
	MBTA Stations













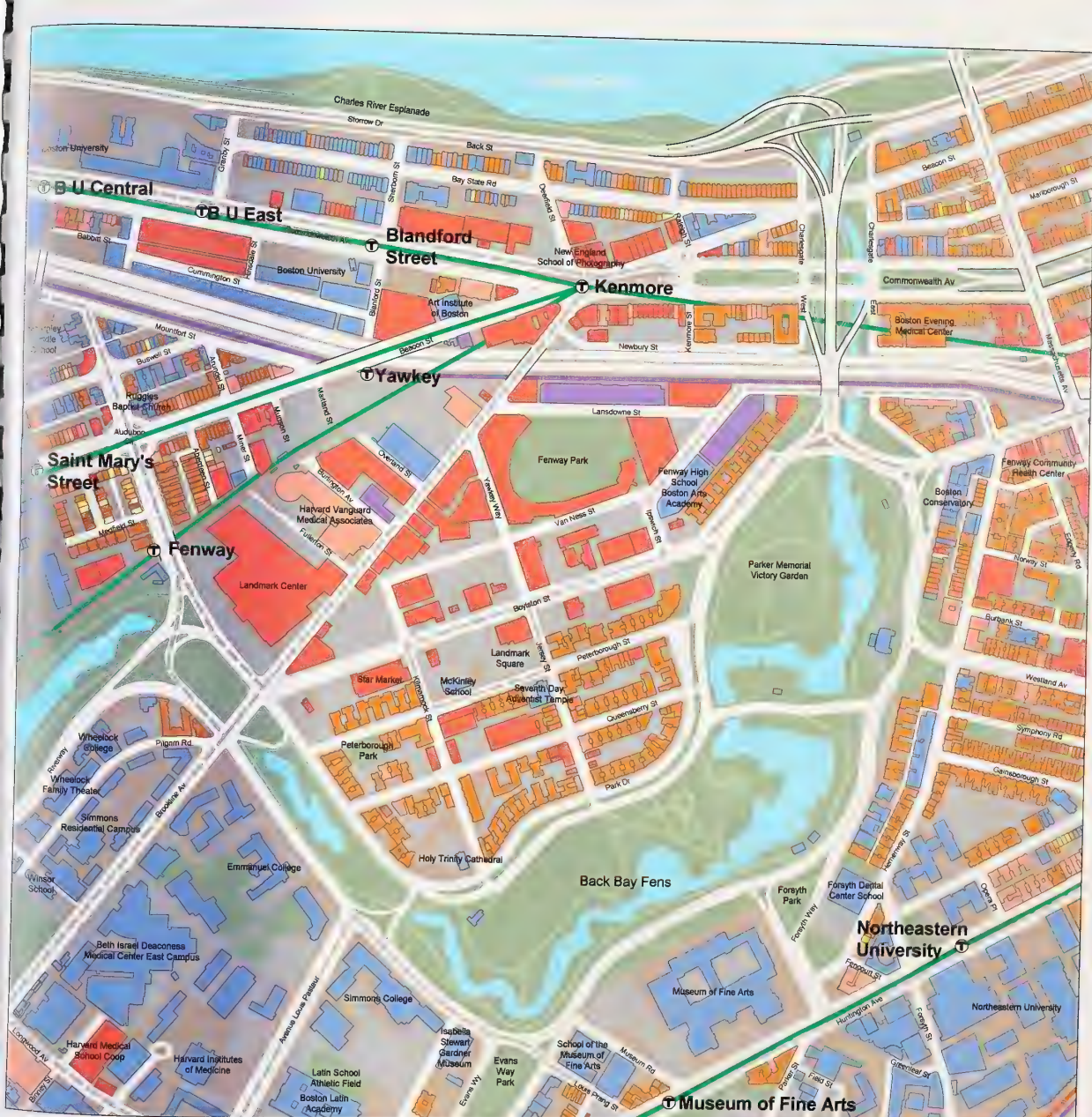












Kenmore/West Fens/Landmark Center













Grove Hall/Franklin Park



---

# Boston 400 Activity Centers

---

## **Allston/Brighton**

Allston Village  
Brighton Center/Oak Square  
Cleveland Circle  
Commonwealth Avenue/Boston University  
North Allston

## **Back Bay**

Back Bay

## **Beacon Hill/West End**

Charles Street/Cambridge Street

## **Charlestown**

Charlestown Navy Yard  
City Square  
Sullivan Square

## **Chinatown/Leather District**

Downtown Crossing/Chinatown

## **Dorchester**

Adams Village  
Ashmont/Peabody Square  
Bowdoin/Geneva and Four Corners  
Codman Square  
Columbia Point  
Fields Corner  
JFK/U/Mass Station  
Lower Mills  
Morrissey Boulevard  
Neponset  
Savin Hill  
Uphams Corner/Everett Square

## **Downtown**

Gov't Center/Bulfinch Triangle/Haymarket  
South Station/Financial District

## **East Boston**

Airport station  
Central Square  
Day Square  
Maverick Square  
Orient Heights

## **Fenway/Kenmore/Audubon**

Kenmore/West Fens/Landmark Center  
Longwood Medical and Academic Area  
Symphony/Mass Ave./Huntington Ave.

## **Hyde Park**

Cleary and Logan Squares  
Readville/Wolcott Square

## **Jamaica Plain**

Forest Hills  
Green Street  
Hyde Square  
Jackson Square  
Jamaica Plain Center

## **Greater Mattapan**

Blue Hill Avenue/Morton Street  
Franklin Field  
Mattapan Square

## **Mission Hill**

Mission Hill

## **North End/Waterfront**

North End

## **Roslindale**

American Legion Highway/Cummins Highway  
Roslindale Village  
Washington Street/West Roxbury Parkway

## **Roxbury**





Blue Hill Avenue (Grove Hall to Dudley Street)

Dudley Square/Melnea Cass Boulevard

Egleston Square/Stony Brook station

Grove Hall/Franklin Park

Highland Park/M.L.K. Boulevard

Roxbury Crossing

Ruggles/Northeastern University

### **South Boston**

Andrew Square

South Boston

South Boston Waterfront/Convention Center

### **South End/Bay Village**

Boston Medical Center/Newmarket

Tremont Street/Bay Village/Theater District

### **West Roxbury**

Washington Street/Grove Street

West Roxbury Center

West Roxbury Quarry area





